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THE INDEPENDENT JEWISH WOMEN'S MAGAZINE WINTER 1994/95, V. 19, N. 4 $4.50

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LILITH

WINTER 1994
VOLUME 19, NO. 4

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LILITH: the legendary predecessor of Eve who insisted on equality with Adam. After the Holy One created the first human being, Adam, the Holy One created a woman, also from the earth, and called her Lilith. Lilith said: "We are equal because we both come from the earth. . . ."

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FROM THE EDITOR

Some recent books about transsexuals claim that there really aren't two sexes after all, and that gender is no more than a social construct. Huh? If we take as evidence what goes on in Jewish organizations, gender looks like the determinant not only of biology but of every other role as well.

Take meetings, for example. For my sins in a former life I go to meetings, and I imagine lots of LILITH's readers feel the same way. Jewish meetings are where patriarchy lives on, feminism notwithstanding, and my patience is wearing thin. In the Jewish community, those running the show are still almost invariably men who—no matter that they are a generation younger and claim to be more "process-oriented" than the predecessors we profiled in LILITH years ago—still view their female peers with condescension. Though the rhetoric in the Jewish community pretends complete equality of participation, access and leadership, none of these is yet a reality.

And the mutual respect women model (for example, in the intergenerational discussion groups that members of the women's task force of New York UJA/Federation have held with Barnard College women for the past few years) is often absent in mixed-gender activities.

Here's a plea: that women who feel we own a stake in the future of the Jewish community not remain passive in the face of our own outrage and disappointment. Women activists have to emerge from our recent passivity and try to change the behaviors (and then the attitudes)of men. If we fail, the best and brightest young women will vote with their feet, and put their energies elsewhere. One example: a 35-year-old woman in Pennsylvania told me recently that in her job as an attorney she always spoke out if she witnessed sexist remarks, patriarchal attitudes or dismissive behavior. Yet as a "young leader" in her Jewish community she feels so disparaged and talked down to ("These men all remind me of my uncles") that she stays silent, putting up with "stuff I'd never take in my firm," so she is madder and madder, more and more disappointed, and asks herself when she's going to have the sense to walk away from Jewish community involvement.

The males in power, running the meetings and the show, are often quite oblivious to the irritating (or soporific) effect they're having on those around them. It feels to me that women and men in the organized Jewish community are inhabiting two separate universes, more so now than ever before. Who are the people with whom you make eye contact at meetings? Who are the people to whom you pass notes when you're bored or outraged? Like unions *vs.* management, or the Jews *vs.* the ruling gentry, Jewish women pass each other the secret signs and signals of the underdog. It may be fun, and secretly empowering, to imagine ourselves part of a subversive universe of women, but we've got to come up from underground and tell those nice guys we've known for years that a change in the way they themselves act toward the women who are professionals or volunteers in the Jewish community may go farther to ensure that women want to stay connected than any grandiose proclamations about the importance of "continuity."

Tell the men what we *really* think

And now—continuity in lower case, and with much appreciation and pleasure. With this issue, Faye Moskowitz joins LILITH as fiction editor, and the deep gratitude of staff and readers goes to Julia Wolf Mazow, who has done a wonderful job in that role for several years.

Susan Weidman Schneider

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LETTERS

THE INFAMOUS "SPEECH EXAM"

Deborah Dash Moore's review of Ruth Jacknow Markowitz's *My Daughter the Teacher* mentions anti-Semitism as one force which drove teachers out of the public school system. It also prevented Jews from even becoming teachers. The infamous "speech exam," required at Brooklyn College before one was allowed to do student teaching, detracked me and many others. Any kind of regionalism in one's speech was okay as long as it was not recognizable as a "New York accent."

Instead of becoming a high school teacher, I became a graduate student. My life would have been quite different if I had passed the "speech test."

Ida Cohen Selavan, Ph.D.
Cincinnati, OH

JEWISH DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

During certain scenes in the film *Schindler's List* I could not help being reminded of abuse I suffered as a Jewish child at the hands of Jewish relatives, who seemed to me to behave just like the Nazis in this film.

For example, during one scene, a Jewish female concentration camp inmate is taken in by a Nazi camp guard who seduces her; when he notices that she is frightened to death and will never have feelings for him, he beats her. This is a scenario similar to what I experienced from the age of about three to six at the hands of my grandfather and uncle.

There are probably many reasons why we try to label problems like sexual abuse as ills of the "goyish" (non-Jewish) society. As Rachel Bat Or explains in the book *The Courage to Heal*: "Because we have to protect our religion from being criticized, we ignore whatever happens in our family. If there are any problems, it's the whole religion that gets looked on, not just our family." As Jews, we instead often focus on "what those Nazis did to us!"

By focusing on the horror of the Holocaust, we can divert our attention from the painful problems that plague Jews together with the rest of society. In doing so, we create an idealistic view of the Jewish people and protect our religion at the expense of our families and children. Of course it is important to forever remember the six million and to keep retelling stories of Holocaust atrocities. But we must not pretend that the Nazis are the only perpetrators of evil while numerous Jewish children are being severely abused in their own homes.

(name withheld)

BAT MITZVAH, DIFFERENTLY

Our community's parent resource guide about bar/bat mitzvah was written entirely by mothers and fathers at Hillel Day School in Farmingtonn Hills, Michigan, [see "Bat/Bar Mitzvah..." Fall 1994] and contains many inspiring accounts of what individual families have done to elevate the spiritual meaning of their children's b'nai/b'not mitzvah celebrations. To order one, contact Vivian Friedman, Hillel Day School of Metropolitan Detroit, 32260 Middlebelt Road, Farmington Hills, MI 48334, (810)851-3220, FAX (810)851-5295.

Nancy Kaplan
Southfield, MI

TIRED OF CHECKING OFF "OTHER"

Thank you for Robin Beth Schaer's "I'm Tired of Checking Off 'Other'" [Summer 1993]. As a liberal Jew who came of age in the '60's, I am opposed to any ideology that is based on lineage and race. As Schaer rightly points out, in the politically correct '90's, there are two groups: "either you are a person of color or you are white." Being a person of color is good; being a white person, especially a Jew, is bad. Blatant racism under the guise of being liberal!

Carol Kort
Brookline, MA

Your articles on Jewish identity in the face of multiculturalism written by your interns touch on an issue which is getting ready to explode. I work with Jews on developing positive Jewish identity, and I find that for many it is an issue that is highly conflicted.

Jewish studies programs are not given the same priority as African-, Asian-, or Latino-American studies programs because they are defined as "European" culture. The irony is that during the thousands of years that Jews lived in Europe, the Europeans did not consider us European. All of a sudden we come to America and we are "European-American" or "white." What we wanted was to be treated like everyone else. But does that necessitate paying the price of being invisible as Jews? No wonder we're struggling with our identity.

Claire Silver
San Francisco, CA

WIDOWHOOD

I am a writer, journalist and a widow. I don't appreciate being told my status is a "nightmare." ["Our Nightmares: Facing Widowhood" Spring 1994]. Since I was single for most of my adult life, I also don't appreciate the implication that my life without a husband was a waste or unimportant. My husband's death was a nightmare, because it was sudden and only months after our marriage. But my singleness is my life, not someone else's bad dream.

Bryna Taubman
New York, NY

Dear Reader: Help others enjoy LILITH too. Take advantage of special gift subsription rates on the postcard bound into this magazine.

The Editors

KOL ISHAH

"WOMAN'S VOICE." TRADITIONALLY, THE VOICE OF THE JEWISH WOMAN WAS NOT TO BE HEARD IN PUBLIC, LEST IT AROUSE MEN. NO MORE. THESE PAGES ARE MEANT FOR NEWS ABOUT JEWISH WOMEN, IN OUR OWN STRONG VOICES.

This Year in Jerusalem

African-American minister, Delores Gray and Jewish-American filmmaker Ruth Broyde-Sharon met in 1992 at a Seder celebrated by over 600 African-American Christians. After filming the Seder for a documentary she was working on, Broyde-Sharon shared with Gray her idea of an inter-faith and inter-racial Seder in Israel. Gray, who had been in the travel business for over two decades, specializing in tours to the Holy Land for African-Americans, also shared Broyde-Sharon's vision.

"What other holiday exists that can reach so many different people on the same level? The reverberations of the Hebrew Exodus from Egypt touch all of us," says Gray. Feeling the same about the importance of Passover, the two women raised money and organized the first annual "Festival of Freedom," in 1993. The two week-trip begins in Egypt and retraces the path of the Exodus, visiting sites holy to Islam, Judaism and Christianity and culminating in Jerusalem with a "Universal Freedom Seder" on the third night of Passover. The group is led through the Sinai to Israel by distinguished spiritual teachers and scholars.

Organizing such a trip was not easy. It was subject to both religious and ideological criticisms. Gray explains why African-Americans and Jews need to make this journey together, "African-Americans and Jews are two groups that have the most to gain from this experience. We feel each other's pain." Participant Eric Greene, who is Jewish and African-American, appreciated the emphasis on Jewish and African-American common slavery experiences. "Where we are going is more important than where we are came from," he says, "the real challenge is deciding to go in the same direction."

Others worried the festival watered down Judaism. Broyde-Sharon says, "We are careful not to offend any particular stream of Judaism. The Seder is on the third night, to respect halakhic prohibitions excluding gentiles from participating in the real Seder."

The unstable political climate of the Middle East also provided obstacles. "The Egypt portion of the trip was canceled in 1993 due to the outbreaks of terrorism. We realized that it is more important than ever to do this. This is exactly the time. Amidst all the fear and political unrest our alliances are a voice of reason," says Broyde-Sharon.

Left: Ruth Broyde-Sharon and Delores Gray
Below: Canadian, Ethiopian and Israeli participants dance during the Festival of Freedom.

They continued with the rest of their trip and held their Seder in Jerusalem. On their Seder plate was an olive branch for hope, a broken chain symbolizing the breaking of all bondage and a glass of almond milk representing nurturing that didn't involve blood shed. The Kiddush was followed by a reading from the Koran and the Lord's Prayer in Aramaic.

In 1994, the 60 people attending the Seder included the trip participants as well as Catholic nuns, local Jews and Palestinians, Black Hebrews from Dimona and Russian immigrants. The Imam Rajai Abdo from Jericho prayed for peace together with Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, the spiritual mentor of the U.S. Havurah movement. Broyde-Sharon explains that for the Imam's wife, "It was the first time she had ever been to such a conference, it was the first time she had ever sat alongside Jews and Arabs. They were so moved by the experience that they invited us to go to Jericho next year, so hopefully on the next trip we will hold a workshop in Jericho."

This year's trip will be led by; civil rights lawyer Stan Levy; writer and political activist Arthur Waskow; and liturgist and educator Phyllis Berman.

If you are interested in spending this year in Jerusalem with the Festival of Freedom you'll have to act quickly. The trip dates are April 3-19, 1995 and final payment must be in by Feb. 3, 1995. Contact: Festival of Freedom, 4219 Vinton Ave, Culver City, CA 90232, Telephone/Fax : (301) 837-2294.

—Robin Beth Schaer

Portrayal of Jewish Women by the Media: Engaging or Enraging?

Images of Jewish female characters such as Molly Goldberg (Gertrude Berg) of The Goldbergs, Blossom (Mayim Bialik) from the television show of the same name, Grandma Sophie (Marion Ross) in Brooklyn Bridge and Andrea Zuckerman (Gabrielle Carteris) from Beverly Hills 90210, flashed across the screen before a crowd of more than 45 (mostly) women in Los Angeles. The audience had gathered for the 11th Annual Organizations Assembly sponsored by the Women's Conference of Jewish Federation Council. The television and movie characterizations of Jewish women they discussed ran the gamut from poignant to cringe-inducing stereotypes.

Deborah Jelin Newmyer, Senior Vi

resident of Development at Steven pielberg's Amblin Entertainment, posed—nd answered—her own question: "Am I ving up to my Jewish heritage by creating nough positive roles models who are also ewish? All I can say—I'm trying." She xplained that it is hard to find a well-ounded character who is not so heroic that he can't be accessible.

"I know that I'm speaking to a group of eople who want me to find the next Jewish raeli general who happens to be a woman," ewmyer quipped, "but if that movie ends o being an action movie and the person rns into Rambo, then I haven't really sponded to Jewish concerns."

Jay Sanderson, Executive Director for the wish Television Network responded that didn't necessarily want to see a film about Jewish Israeli female general, but would ke to see a few solid Jewish women in levision and film so that his daughter, now months old, will know it's okay to be Jewish. Negative portrayals of Jewish life and Jewish characters on television, Sanderson asserts, reflect the real lives of Jewish television writers, who themselves are often assimilated and/or intermarried.

Molly Selvin, editorial writer for the Los Angeles Times, was asked if print media distinguish between Jewish and non-Jewish women. "Unless the story specifically involves religious affiliation, I would argue that Jewish identity is often irrelevant in print news." She conducted an informal poll and a review of the Times database since 1985, looking up newsmakers such as attorneys Marcia Clark, Robert Shapiro, Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Senator Dianne Feinstein. None of their names appeared with the word "Jewish" in any L. A. Times article. She explained that Jewish identity is only mentioned when the article's subject raises the issue.

Gabrielle Carteris, the "real life" daughter of a Jewish mother and Greek father, plays a socially conscious, Jewish identified student on the popular television series Beverly Hills 90210. When she decided to wear a Jewish star during filming, "the higher-ups" asked her to remove it "because Middle America is not into that." Carteris responded that she would take it off if everybody else she worked with took off their crosses and the executives agreed.

"Today, the stereotyping that I see as an American Jewish woman, on television particularly, is a little disturbing," said Andrea King, screenwriter and former journalist. She lists several shows (Seinfeld, Mad About You, Thirty-something, L.A. Law, Northern Exposure, and Anything But Love) where Jewish men date, sleep with, are married to, or divorced from non-Jewish women. "The very negative message that American Jewish women are not good enough for American Jewish men is going out to anyone watching television."

King finds the portrayals of Jewish women both engaging and enraging but understands both sides of the issue, "As a writer, sometimes I find myself making choices I'm proud of, and sometimes not—but I understand, from a business perspective, that you can't cater to the concern of 2% of the people." King has just sold her first screenplay to Steven Spielberg—a "modern-day Cyrano story about a Jewish woman, only instead of a big nose she's overweight, and afraid she won't be loved."

Elisa Wayne, chair of the event, asked in closing: "As Jews living in Los Angeles, we are not only the audience but many of the producers, directors writers, actors and CEOs in the entertainment industry. What price are we willing to pay for box office receipts and Neilson ratings? And is the price worth losing ourselves in translation?" Participants received studio and network addresses, sample letters to write encouraging positive images of Jewish women, and tips for discussing these issues with children. For copies, contact Women's Conference, Jewish Federation Council, 6505 Wilshire Blvd. #212, Los Angeles, CA 90048.

—Sherill Kushner

(continued on next page)

First Eve, Now Shohama

The Academy for Jewish Religion in New York has installed Rabbi Dr. Shohama Harris Wiener as the first women President of a rabbinical and cantorial seminary.

The Academy for Jewish Religion is the only pluralistic seminary in the United States; students combine Jewish scholarship with an exploration of the full range of Jewish religious and spiritual practices. The Academy's mission is "to prepare mature men and women with a love of Torah to serve as spiritual leaders, committed to pluralism within the Jewish community."

Since its founding 40 years ago, the Academy has ordained over 60 rabbis. Most of the alumni are male but in the last few years the classes have been evenly split. In 1994, four students were ordained and in 1995, seven students will be, including five women. The students follow a five-year couse of study, and a majority take congregational appointments after ordination.

Rabbi Shohama Wiener

Rabbi Wiener has served as the Executive Dean and Spiritual Director of the Academy for seven years. Ordained at the Academy, Rabbi Wiener went on to earn a Doctor of Ministry degree from the New York Theological Seminary.

Recognizing the special nature of this inauguration ceremony, the Academy preceeded it with a same-day conference on "Women and Spirituality," featuring, Blu Greenberg, Rabbi Nina Beth Cardin, Rabbi Dr. Sue Elwell, Dr. Bonna Haberman and Dr. Jonathan Magonet.

Feminist Political Theater Crosses Boundaries in Jerusalem

The interchange between Arab and Jew in the Middle East plays out in political extremes, from the ultimate expression of irreconcilable hatred in the person of the suicide terrorist to the harnessing of great symbols of nationalism to lead entire peoples into mutual acceptance. The social and cultural exchanges between Palestinian and Israelis have been far less dramatic and often take place at the margin of the political dialogue.

In the play *Cycles* (*Maagalim* in Hebrew), the Jerusalem theater troupe "Eshet Ofra" (Woman of Earth) transcends Arab-Israeli ideology. Eshet Ofra describes itself as "a group of women, Palestinian and Israeli, . . . who have taken upon themselves to work together in theater." The cast of *Cycles*, two Israeli and two Palestinian women, uses three languages (Arabic, English and Hebrew) interchanged almost line by line as they portray the life passages of Lulu.

PHOTO BY: YOSEFA DRESCHER

A scene from *"Cycles"* portraying an Arab woman before her arranged marriage.

This is the story of a woman. Her character progresses from a small Arab girl outraged by the societal proscriptions imposed on her in order that she conform to her role, to a confused and sexually ambivalent Israeli adolescent, a rebellious Arab bride to be, then finally to a generic western careerist, struggling with her priorities and expectations.

Lulu is played by different members of the cast as the play goes on, and her language changes from scene to scene, along with the phase of her life and the stage setting. However the themes of a woman defining her life and femininity in the face of the reality of societal mores, traditions and expectations remain constant, as do the other women in the play—variously a chorus of confidantes, friends, agents of stifling coercion and finally a coven of delphic witches in the Tel Aviv city dump.

The groups members—Naomi Ackerman, Raid Ghazala, Corrine Markov, and Iman Oun, along with director Shai Bar Yaacov—collaborated in writing *Cycles*, bringing to the project experiences and impressions of women in two separate but connected societies. As the play follows some "universal" life events of Lulu, it is laced with the culture and folklore of Jewish, Arab and modern Israeli life and rides a shifting tide of language, easily grasped if one is fluent in two of the languages and probably still comprehensible if the audience knows only one.

The play itself makes no reference to the politics of the day, but its existence could not be divorced from surrounding realities. Rehearsals were postponed at times until necessary permits could be obtained by the Palestinian actresses, who live on the West Bank, to enter Jerusalem during periods when access was restricted. According to Ackerman, Eshet Ofra is the first Israeli theater group to perform in East Jerusalem in Hebrew since the city was reunited in 1967. Ackerman, one of the Israeli actresses, described this experience as very different from performing in front of Israeli audiences "There, (in East Jerusalem) the Arab folktales in the script evoke enormous response from the audience, for whom they are familiar and symbolic. The audience is much more interactive and expressive than in West Jerusalem." Although most performances are at the group's home theater, Habamah, in Jerusalem's industrial Talpiot section, in front of mainly Hebrew-and English-speaking audiences, the play was performed at the Arabic Theater Festival in Nazereth, and the group hopes to perform at some point in Jericho or Gaza.

In these heady days of change in the Big Picture in Israel and the Middle East, *Cycles* and Eshet Ofra represent small but significant changes taking place in perception and reflection in the hearts and minds of the people who see its performances. For tickets and information call Habamah Theater in Jerusalem telephone (02) 733814.

—Michael Drescher

Dora Wasserman: Grand Dame of Yiddish Theatre

Dora Wasserman, the grande dame of Montreal's Yiddish Theatre, has at last received recognition for her work as a theatre producer. She was recently named, at 75, to the Order of Canada—the country's highest civilian honor.

Wasserman works out of the Saidye Bronfman Centre in Montreal. Her all-volunteer troupe, now in its 34th season, puts on two shows a year, each averaging (in a 306-seat hall) an impressive 85 percent capacity crowd.

During the last four decades Wasserman has produced nearly 60 shows, including *It's Hard To Be A Jew* (by Sholom Aleichem), *Kiddush Hashem* (by Sholem Asch), *The Unseen* (by I. B. Singer), *Green Fields* (by Peretz Hirschbein), *Hotsmakh* (by Itsik Manger) and *The Duke* (by Alter Kaczyne). Among her most popular productions were *Bintel Brief* ("A Bundle of Letters"), based on immigrants' letters to the advice columnist of the Jewish Daily Forward and Papineau, derived from a diary kept by the beadle of a synagogue in the Papineau district of Montreal from 1904 to 1956.

Wasserman recently produced a spirited performance of Montreal playwright Michel Tremblay's classic *Les Belles Soeurs* ("The Sister-in-Laws") translated into Yiddish by Golde Morgentaler and historian Pierre Anctil. Set in a Montreal working-class district

the play pungently portrays 15 women gathered together to paste into books the trading stamps their neighbor has won. Their gossiping, laughter and bickering, whether in the French original or in Yiddish translation, delights audiences with its authenticity.

Dora Wasserman—Yiddish grande dame

Born in Ukraine in 1920 and graduated rom the Yiddish Art Theatre in Moscow nd the Kiev State Theatre, Wasserman rrived in Canada in 1950 as a penniless mmigrant, formed the Yiddish Drama roup, and in 1973 moved her amateur roupe into a permanent home at the aidye Bronfman Centre.

She views her theatrical work in Iontreal as the continuation of the six ears she spent at the Kiev State Theatre in ie 1940's training under Solomon Iikhoels, formerly the director of the iddish Art Theatre in Moscow. In ebruary 1948, as Stalin was cracking own on "rootless cosmopolitans," Iikhoels was killed. Soon afterward, the wish theater in Moscow was forced to ose, as were Yiddish-language play-ouses in Kiev, Minsk, Kharkov, Odessa d even Birobidzhan.

With her Yiddish stage colleagues lisappearing" in Stalin's purges, asserman decided to flee the U.S.S.R. ie made her way to Poland, and from ere she spent time at a displaced persons mp in Vienna. At the age of 30, not owing a word of either French or nglish, she found herself in Montreal th her husband, Sam (now a retired rrier) and two young daughters.

It didn't take long before Wasserman und her way back to the theater. "I went the Jewish Public Library and said I would like to do something with children. In 1952 there were a lot of Yiddish-speaking children," she recalls.

Soon she was giving hundreds of performances as a singer, pianist and guitarist. Many of those first children she taught later joined her Yiddish Theatre, which staged its first production, *The Innkeeper*, in 1957.

At first Wasserman's company mounted only one production a year, but as her troupe became more professional she began to take on more work. A high point came in the 1970s with shows like *The Rothchilds* which featured a cast of 60. She has accomplished her theatrical wizardry with a minuscule budget, annually wiping out her deficits with a fund-raising dinner. "We don't get any government grants," she stresses. "The Canada Council gives only to professional theaters."

Despite the relatively large numbers of mamaloshen speakers in Montreal, Wasserman acknowledges that demographics are not in her favor. Even some of the actors in her troupe have little or no knowledge of the language, and memorize their lines phonetically.

"We have to start depending on young, English-speaking people," she says. And for that reason—to instill a love of Yiddish and theater—she travels to Jewish schools putting on extracurricular programs that attract some 3,000 students a year.

Wasserman hopes that her daughter, Bryna, who directs theater in New York, will one day take over the troupe she founded. And what of the future of Yiddish itself? "I think there is a movement coming back," says Wasserman optimistically. "If people want it, it will certainly come back. It just can't pass away."

—Gil Kezwer

(continued on page 36)

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Women's Holocaust Manuscripts

HOW DOES *LILITH* WORK WITH HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS? AND HOW CAN OUR READERS TEACH THEIR TEXTS?

One of my most painful tasks, as an editor here in these cozy LILITH offices, is that of rejecting manuscripts written by Holocaust survivors. How can an editor 'select out,' as it were, a manuscript that begins: "Beloved *Tatteh*, dead of starvation . . . ," or another, just arriving in the mail this morning: "Sorting laundry at Auschwitz, I found a rag doll in a child's coat, a little rag doll wearing a little green dress and a little red hat. I tucked it into my striped prison overalls, but was discovered and sent to the punishment block. My gassed children had had dolls like that."

Ten years ago, LILITH received perhaps one Holocaust manuscript per week. These days it's more like one per day—plus a river of Holocaust-related non-memoirs: fiction, poems, children's books, academic treatises, manuscripts from the children of survivors (and even some from these children's children). There is simply no way that we can publish it all.

As Holocaust survivors age, many who have never publicly told their stories before are now hastening to do so: at ages 60, 70, 75. But this resolve—to bring up their hidden stories—incurs significant psychic cost. Realizing this at LILITH, we find ourselves treasuring each Holocaust memoir we receive in the mail, keeping all of them (even those we've 'rejected') in a blue plastic vertical file that I now patently realize—as I write this—is our own holy *Genizah*: our reliquary where sacred articles which are not (now) usable, but which according to Jewish law cannot be destroyed, are stored.

In being privy to these harrowing narratives, I've come to feel that I'm in the presence of *kiddush hashem*—that is, acts of religious martyring (like 'witnessing' at the expense of the self's safety), Sanctification of the Name.

These manuscripts uphold Judaism's '11th Commandment': *Zakhor*, remember, recount. *Zakhor* is a natural corollary to the fifth commandment ("Honor Thy Parents"): "Honor Thy Children." Honor us with your stories (however painful they are to tell), with the transmission of sacred history, of which your life is a part.

I've become aware, in working with these expensive documents, how grateful I am to be living during survivors' lifetimes: to be a part of the 'generation after.' I've come to feel an almost implausible intimacy with other Jewish 'generations after': the generation after the Inquisition, after the Crusades, after the destruction of the first Temple in Jerusalem, after the second. I am grateful that this generation of survivors is still alive during my lifetime.

We need to acknowldege that the sand is indeed running out of the hourglass. Survivor Tikva Slomovic tells her students, "You have a survivor here, a live person. There aren't many of us. Soon there will be nobody left to tell what we lived through. When we're all dead, we'll have an outpouring of Holocaust denial literature." Tikva's fears parallel our own. The next century will bring not only scholarship, but myth-making, official distortion and neglect. In the Jewish community we will take on one more vised layer of unconscious collective "Jewishness," with whatever that entails: paranoia, generosity, introspection, grief. . . ."

When LILITH set out to publish the following five Holocaust-related stories, we remembered that there are two ways of spreading light: to be the candle or the mirror that reflects it. Clearly, survivors' manuscripts are the candles; how could LILITH provide mirrors? And so LILITH staffer Justyn Lezin and myself sought out five educators to help us pensivly amplify the lessons taught by the Holocaust. Survivor Tikva Slomovic, one of these educators, challenges us, indeed, with the most closely held mirror: Are we valuing aging Holocaust survivors enough—or are we already courting excruciating regret because we have failed to do so? □

INTRODUCTION BY *SUSAN SCHNUR* TO *LILITH'S* SPECIAL HOLOCAUST SECTION

Simple Story

BY SHERRY GOLD

I remember it so clearly: walking on the cobblestones behind the casket, the casket of my mother. The sound of the iron rim wheels on the stones still reverberates in my memory. Everyone was so kind. I was three.

I had now become an orphan, even though I had a father.

I was born in Utyan, a small *shtetl* in Lithuania, in 1926. Economic and political conditions were not good, especially so for a young, ambitious Jew like my father. He had felt that emigrating to America was the only answer, and he had done so when I was only six months old.

The author by mother's gravestone, 1936

My father, of course, expected to send for his wife and infant daughter almost immediately, but it was not to be. Without having given it much thought, my father had met up with a single man, and had bought his visa. He thereafter had to "impersonate" this man. The immigration authorities would not countenance his bringing over newly discovered dependents.

And so the months and years passed, my father trying desperately and constantly to get his family to America. Then my mother became ill with typhoid, dying soon after. I had lost my mother, and didn't know my faraway father.

I moved in with my mother's younger unmarried sister, and then commenced a delightful two years. Aunt Mina lived a very cosmopolitan existence in Kovna—quite different from tiny Utyan. She felt so guilty about "letting" my mother die that she spoiled me thoroughly. I even had fruit in the winter.

But this idyllic existence was not to last. My father, overcome with guilt, felt that he could not let my young aunt sacrifice her future for me. He sent orders that I be packed off to Poland to live with his parents.

Going from Lithuania to Poland was not so simple, though—the two countries were not on speaking terms: the border was closed. It turned out that once a year, however (on *Tisha B'Av*, the Jewish fast day commemorating the destruction of the Temple), Jews of the *shtetlach* on both sides of the border were allowed to pray together at the cemetery, which had, so to speak, been split down the middle. It was comparatively easy for a young child to arrive at the cemetery with one family, and to leave with another. And so one summer day in 1933, I arrived in my grandparents' small house in Poland.

It was quite a shock going from being the spoiled favorite of Aunt Mina to being just another grandchild. I knew they loved me, but I was on guard. Did I have to be always on my best behavior? Otherwise would I be sent away? And to where? The years passed.

Finally, when I was 10, my father secured a visa for me to enter the U.S.—but as a Lithuanian. In other words, I had to cross the Polish-Lithuanian border again. The *Tisha B'Av* ruse had long ago been discovered and squelched. "Smuggling" was now the accepted operation.

It turned out that the Polish-Lithuanian border cut across many farms, leaving some families in the unusual position of having their farmhouse in one country and their fields in another. These people soon realized that more money could be made by helping others cross the border than by raising vegetables.

So one June day, a frightened girl was deposited with a strange farmer who then warned, "We must wait for a moonless night." Three evenings later, covered with hay, I was placed in a farm wagon and told to wait, not to utter a sound. Not until sunrise did the farmer return. He hitched his horses to the wagon, and transported me across the border. To this day I am not sure whether the sounds I heard were my heart pounding or a border guard getting ready to jab his bayonet into a suspicious pile of hay.

Several days later, my aunt retrieved me at a local fair. What a reunion! I hadn't seen her in years. She was now married and pregnant. It was as if I had never left. I stayed with her for six months, and when she went to the hospital

to give birth, I managed to develop appendicitis and be hospitalized beside her. [She survived the war, but led a traumatized life; her husband and baby did not survive.]

Soon I was on a train through Nazi Germany (it was 1938) to the port of Cherberg in France, and thence across the ocean to a man I had no recollection of, my father.

I was so eager to meet him. I'd heard so many stories! I knew he was all alone in America and I wanted to take care of him. I knew he would be terribly affectionate, hugging and kissing me. On the boat I danced and sang all day and night with young Zionist pioneers who were on their way to Palestine via America. They had their exciting journey ahead of them, and I had mine.

The ship docked. I looked over the sea of faces and wondered which one was my father. Finally, I was introduced to him. He was so good-looking, so handsome with jet black hair. He smiled, and gave me a gentle kiss. He didn't know what to say; I didn't know what to say. No hugs came, none of the warmth I had dreamt about.

The years passed, and it turned out that my father and I never did grow close. I am sure that both of us had such distortedly high expectations of one another that disappointment was inevitable. We'd both waited years, and sacrificed much, anticipating our reunion. My father had deliberately not married again, so as to be able to devote all his attention to trying to rescue me from Europe, and to be fully available to me when I finally did make it to America.

Still, though, I remember how my father walked away from the dock with me on that day nearly 50 years ago. He was telling me how wonderful America was—the tall buildings, the tunnel we would soon be going through. The "spell," however, that I had cultivated for my whole young life—the dream of what it would be like to be reunited with my prince-father—was already shattered. I replied icily, "We had tall buildings in Lithuania, too. But they were horizontal instead of vertical." I was trying to tell him that the places I had lived for 12 years were significant, too—it was his country that was disappointing.

And so I tried for many years to believe that it was America—and not my father— that broke my heart. □

Sherry Gold, mother of four children, is a social worker for Jewish Family Service in New Jersey. Previously, she taught nursery school.

Leah Strigler: When a young educator teaches the Holocaust

Leah Strigler, 26, attended the Yad Vashem Teachers' Institute in Jerusalem. Currently a Wexner Fellow, she has an M.A. in Jewish Education from the Jewish Theological Seminary, and is finishing up a second M.A. in Museum Education at Bank Street College. Here is how Strigler would teach Sherry Gold's "Simple Story":

I'd use this story as part of a culmination of a serious historical study of the Holocaust—a way to put a personal, humane face on facts and figures. By the time my students were to read this, I'd expect them to know a lot:

What was happening in Eastern Europe during these pre-War years? During the era of Gold's childhood (when she mentions that Lithuanian and Polish borders were closed) what was going on politically between these two countries? Gold meets Zionists on the boat to America—what were the forces that were bringing Jews to Palestine? In America, what were the tensions between groups of immigrants? What Jewish identity issues pertained to nationality, religion, economics?

In other words, this story could be part of a bridge between our scholarship, and the students' own creative relationships to the material.

It would be fun to generate questions to fill out Gold's story. Like, "Pretend you're interviewing Sherry Gold. What do you want to know more about? Pretend you *are* Sherry Gold. On the boat to America, what are your thoughts and fears? Keep a 10-day diary."

Younger kids would worry about Sherry's separations from people she loved. I'd ask, "What do you think this felt like? What was it like, in those days, taking trips alone? Why would a father leave his family behind; how is that different from the abandonment we might read into a father's actions today?" We'd talk about planes and faxes versus wagons and trains and boats. I would point out that this is a child's story—Sherry's mother's death is the little girl's most pressing dilemma, blocking out the larger reality of war. Sherry's real question is: Who will take care of me?

If I was teaching at a Jewish summer camp, say, I'd read this story on Tisha B'Av. I'd ask: On this day when so many bad things happened to Jews historically, what's happening symbolically to the Jews standing with this 5 year old at a cemetery, smuggling her from one scary country to the next?

POLISH CHRISTIAN TEENAGERS

AN INTERVIEW

BY MAXINE MOORE

Maxine Moore, an American Jew recently visiting Poland on a journalism assignment, met with some Polish (Christian) 17 year olds from intelligentsia (liberal, educated) families. She asked them what they knew, if anything, about Jews.

Maxine Moore: Have you ever seen a Jew?

Roger: Yes, on T.V. I saw Fiddler on the Roof. But Jews are all in Israel now.

What happened to the Jews?

Roger: They were killed in concentration camps by Germans, or they emigrated after the war.

Did any Poles kill them?

Marta: I think yes, unfortunately.

Is Poland anti-Semitic today?

Marta: Yes, even though there are no Jews. From generation to generation it is passed down. To be a Jew is to be different. Anything peculiar is referred to as a 'Jew.' Polish people are closed to what is different; if you are different you are bad, smaller, worse, low-class.

"TO HATE JEWS IS A POLISH FAD."

I am grateful to be open to the differences I learned when I visited America. I am ashamed to be Polish and don't want to be here anymore. I want my children to be proud.

Maciek: In our school there are many Jewish jokes which I don't want to repeat. We were talking about the Warsaw ghetto uprising commemoration ceremony in school, and one girl said that if she had been someone who knew (back then) that there were still so many Jews left in the ghetto, she would have gotten a band of people together to kill them. She screamed that she hates Jews.

Did you ask her why she hates Jews?

Maciek: Yes. She answered, 'I hate. I don't know why I hate.' I can't talk to people like that. To hate Jews is a Polish fad, a European tradition. There is a difference in thinking, though, between us and our parents. I am sure my parents knew and heard about the concentration camps. In Poland during the war, we were the only country where helping Jews was punishable by death. My grandfather saw Poles killed for helping Jews. It left a lasting impression on him.

Marta: My grandparents lived in a poor village. Many Jews were in that village, friends of my grandparents. During the war many were killed, sent to concentration camps. My grandparents had a difficult time accepting this, and were deeply touched by it because they were friends. My grandparents were not anti-Semitic—there is no anti-Semitism in my family. I have a friend, though, who was in love with an English teacher. She found out he is a Jew and then she said, 'I don't want him.'

Maciek: If there is one Jew, he will pull in other Jews. Maybe this is not so good. Polish people pull for Poles. Jews pull for Jews. This isn't their country. Jews are very capable, and everyone knows they are intelligent.

Susan: People are envious. There is a lot of anti-Semitism in the older generation. My grandmother blames the Jews for the economy, holes in the street and the ozone level. My mom says, however, that we will miss Jews in our life, that my little brother will miss them on the playground. I want

them here again, but it will never happen. Life was more colorful then—we didn't have to love them, but we shouldn't have killed them. They were our Jews.

Roger: I don't like Jews. There is a Jewish boy I know. He is only nice when he wants something from you. Before the war, my grandfather was very rich. He lost all his money and the Jews wouldn't help.

Did the Poles help?

Roger: No, but they didn't have the money the Jews had. There is a saying, "Our house [the Poles]; Your street [the Jews]." A Jew only sees money; it's the most important thing to him. Jews were prejudiced against the Polish people.

Stash [a 10-year-old sibling listening in]: In my school the kids play a game, 'Kill a Jew.' You aim a knife at a rock. If it hits, a Jew is dead. I asked the children, 'Do you know what a Jew is?' They answered, 'No.'

I don't want to grow up here. □

Maxine Moore is a writer who specializes in feminist, human rights and environmental issues.

MRS. SLOMOVIC: WHEN A SURVIVOR TEACHES THE HOLOCAUST

Tikva Slomovic, 69, is a concentration camp survivor who has taught at Temple Beth Am in Los Angeles for 33 years. Known as only "Mrs. Slomovic" to thousands of now-grown Beth Am alumni, she is powerfully remembered by students as the provider of their most serious early exposure to the Holocaust. Says LILITH Intern Justyn Lezin (a Slomovic product): "Whenever she could, Mrs. Slomovic would bring some aspect of the Holocaust into the curriculum. She would always preface these lessons by saying, 'Now I'm going to talk about the Holocaust. This is always hard for me. I always cry.' Then in very plain language she would tell us about her experiences, including her witnessing of the murders of her sister and her sister's child."

"I haven't forgotten any of it," Lezin continues. "Mrs. Slomovic would roll up her sleeve, and then talk about tattoos. Seeing this taught me that there were people walking around everywhere with scars under their clothing, visible and not. In interviewing Mrs. Slomovic for this article, I was reminded that creative teaching, though crucial, doesn't hold a candle to what an actual survivor can transmit. I also realized—when Mrs. Slomovic mentioned to me on the phone that she was too afraid to ever see Schindler's List—that each telling of her story (though she did it over and over to generations of us) took more of a toll on her than I could ever understand."

Here is how Tikva Slomovic would teach Maxine Moore's interview with Polish Christian teenagers:

"I would use this interview with Polish teenagers to teach American teenagers. I would have my students act out each part—becoming each of the Polish teens in the interview. I would talk about how anti-Semitism is still alive, and about how my experience of Poland was that the Catholic Church's theology taught people to be anti-Semitic. Then we would discuss minorities in America—Blacks, Latinos. I would ask, 'Is 'looking down' on someone—like many Polish Christians look down on Jews—a part of a larger, more dangerous problem?'

"When I teach the kids I always tell them, 'You have a survivor here, a live person. Not just a story written down. Unfortunately, there aren't many of us. Slowly there will be nobody to tell what they lived through. When we're all dead, we'll have an outpouring of Holocaust denial literature. When I talk about all of this I feel like crying," she adds. "My whole body is excited, anxious."

Eliezer Slomovic (a.k.a. Dr. Slomovic), a recently retired University of Judaism professor, is prodded by his wife to add his thoughts: "Along with teaching Maxine Moore's interview, I would look at relevant passages from the Christian Scriptures. I would ask the students: How does dehumanization happen? How is it that someone who has never seen a Jew still knows that she or he hates them? Children are supposedly 'tabula rasa'—I would ask the class, 'Is this idea a fiction?'"

How to Hide:
Instructions from a Daughter of Survivors

BY KAREN PROPP

Shlep that suitcase tied with a rope long after the rope breaks. Clutch an old brass lamp you once bought at a corner antiques store. Polish it up. Go on, buy a bulb. In your next home, conjure plenty with the scarves you drape over sticks of furniture. People will remark on your "resourcefulness." How long will you be staying this time? A connoisseur of string and packing tape, you recite street names like a litany.

When the landlord shows an apartment, pretend to inspect for closet space, cockroaches, and fire hazards. Count the electrical outlets. In truth, you are looking for back staircases, trap doors to attics, closets that open into hidden rooms. Do this also at parties when everyone has forgotten you: standing against the wall, a mild expression on your face, hands behind your back. Creep around looking for basement entrances, spare rooms, back doors. If anyone asks, say you're interested in architecture. The astute individual who notes your communings with walls and thresholds, someone's father, will praise your gift for relating to space.

RUTH STERN DANIS' "THE FLIGHT"

Transfer colleges at least once, preferably mid-semester, telling no one, departing under cover of darkness, leaving behind your unpaid bills and no forwarding address.

Wear dark, dreary, nondescript clothing that hides your figure. Slouch if you are tall. Drape yourself around chairs. Hesitate to stand. Let your hair fall across your face. Walk the edges of corridors, taking small, quick, wavering steps.

If you are short, stand next to pillars of basketball players—you'll appear to disappear. Wear faded t-shirts with pictures of animals and your hair in braids. Ask other people to reach objects on high shelves. You want to find out who is willing to help.

Keep a low profile and an unpublished phone number. Practice getting lost in crowds.

This is essential: have several places to hide.

Ingratiate yourself to a few powerful individuals in your social network who have a sensitivity to anti-Semitism. Tell these people the truth. One or both of your parents hid from the Nazis and is alive today partly because of the good will of others. Kept in attics or basements. Passed off as visiting relatives.

Perhaps they assumed a false identity and traveled with false papers. They were lucky. Someone sponsored their immigration. Say this confidentially, out of context, spontaneously, in a rush of emotion often followed by flushed skin, tears, the jitters.

Watch as that person experiences a renewed sense of your vulnerability and worth in the world. Avoid feelings of martyrdom and heroism. Think ahead: it could happen again.

In general, when asked your religion, say, "I wasn't really raised to be anything." If pressed, drop your eyes and say, "Jewish."

Or, after a long acquaintance, inadvertently mention you are Jewish. As if it's a shoe size. Be pleased when the person exclaims, "I didn't know! You certainly don't look Jewish." Sigh with relief. You can pass. If you have blond hair or blue eyes, or both, feel especially lucky.

When you have a house of your own, maintain at least one room—neat and furnished—as a spare room. You never know. You believe in kindness; you practice quid pro quo. Shelter should not go unused in your single, childless life.

People who will want to use the spare room for varying lengths of time include: friends adrift in their lives or in flight from live-in lovers, the teenage sister of a Catholic college friend waiting out her pregnancy far from her small-town home, commuting academics, a friend who comes into the city for monthly chemotherapy. And parents, who will visit often.

Encourage your visitors to bring memorabilia, leave clothing, and use the phone. Make them feel at home.

Keep your passport intact. Collect shoulder bags, leather bags, beach bags, lunch bags, overnight bags.

Maintain more than one permanent residence, preferably in two different countries. Keep busy buying two of everything, shipping boxes, and interior decorating: creating secure, beautiful homes for a complicated you requires stamina and devotion. Cultivate a slight, hard-to-place accent. Constantly refer to the locale where you are not. Boast about friends around the globe, but keep a certain aloofness.

If you hold an office job, nod sympathetically when friends arrive panic-stricken at your cubicle and say they are "hiding" from the boss. Talk about yourself reluctantly, if at all, and always be willing to listen. Be considered "private." But loyal.

Here are some obvious professions to consider: Teaching English as a second language (a new generation of refugees), adoption agencies (remember the children's transports), victims' rights groups (your empathy and organizational skills). Real estate is an option, but one that may not satisfy your social conscience.

Statistically, you should not be here. Mistrust statistics. Believe in the exception to the rule.

Avoid controversies. Be neutral. Be the advisor instead of the star. Above all, avoid conspicuous living and arousing the envy of peers.

"After a long aquaintance, inadvertently mention you are Jewish. As if it's a shoe size."

Or, rise in an organization where no one would ever expect to find you: for example, the Y.M.C.A. when you are neither young, male, nor Christian.

Best to defer career decisions in favor of the dilettante's expertise, for with multiple training and transferable skills you will always be useful somewhere to someone.

Train yourself in outdoor survival: winter camping, recognition of edible and poisonous plants, long-distance swimming.

Experiment with giving a false name when making reservations or when meeting strangers in bars, airplanes, supermarkets. Make a game out of these opportunities to practice answering to a name other than your own, and choose names your parents would never have considered: Heather, Vanessa, Bobbie Ann. Tell friends who witness this behavior that it's the repressed actress in you.

Be drawn to men who suffered early, irretrievable losses such as physical/sexual abuse or the death of a parent. Have a deeply enduring sympathy for these lovers. Nevertheless, expect pain. Play victim to a man's victimizer—given your guilt, you'd rather be hurt than hurt.

Hide in a marriage to a man with an important career and serve him, his work, his name. Expect your children's lives to become your own.

Live with a quiet, unrelenting and nameless fear in the midst of good fortune and ease. A whispering secret that won't leave you alone, and one that arrives like an intruder when you are alone. You are mostly alone. Your life is like a thin strip of light under the door: surrounded by blackness and in danger of being shut off. And you aren't even the one who was in the war.

Hide from yourself. Who are you anyway? Isn't every

breath of your existence taken at the expense of six million? That readiness to step into the crevices others leave. An unwillingness to impose. Your famous reticence. Without even having been told, you act as if the penalty for a real self is to be shot down, turned in, taken away.

Remember: a nice person is the American translation of a good German. Learn to distinguish between a nice person and everyone else. See ferry boat operators who squeeze you aboard as the ship is leaving shore or strangers who return your lost wallet in the mail as necessary and convincing signs that spontaneous acts of generosity do continue.

Test the world. The well-meaning neighbor, the kind employer, the munificent lender, the tender friend and the honorable lover—goodness exists in fissures you fall through.

Test the world, but if you're lucky, shed your unwieldy cocoon. You might begin inhaling the scent of new luggage. Try flicking on a sturdy floor lamp. Go on, roll out the rug. Fasten a silver mezuzah on the door frame. Breathe deeply. No one's coming up the stairs. Listen to what's written on your heart. What you'll repeat.

You are here. □

Karen Propp is a writer who lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts. She has published widely and teaches at Boston College.

Nechama Liss-Levinson: When a Psychoanalyst Teaches the Holocaust

Nechama Liss-Levinson, 42, is a psychoanalyst and writer. Her forthcoming book is *When A Grandparent Dies: A Parent/Child Workbook for Shiva and the Year Beyond* [Jewish Lights Press]. Here is how Liss-Levinson would teach Karen Propp's "How to Hide":

I might use this beautifully written story as a tool when working with people who struggle with trauma. Propp describes a specific trauma here: that is, not that of actually having *experienced* the awful event, but that of "psychically witnessing" someone else's trauma. In this story, the woman is profoundly affected, developing her own unique form of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

This story is only one person's "instruction manual," one person's *way* to be a child of survivors. I might tell someone: "There are many different instruction manuals to be written, many existential lessons to be drawn. Can you use Propp's story to open a door, to help you understand the power of your own narrative?"

Propp's tone is staccato and pressured, so intimate, like she pulls us into a dark alley and whispers, "Here's the deal!"—and then tells us something slightly crazy, yet scrupulously thought out. Why this urgency and secrecy? This sense of testing oneself constantly? For a person who has experienced trauma, this story might feel like a good support group: feeling intimate kinship with the speaker, but not having to respond back.

"How to Hide" shows the extraordinary development of what's called a "false self." It's dangerous to let one's "real self" show: it literally invites annihilation. There's this frightening split (who you *really* are vs. who the world *thinks* you are). One must flee one's identity, constantly refabricate it. The woman in this story has lost touch with her original goal—to run until she's safe. Instead, running *becomes* her life, staying alive at all costs.

We feel our own need to hope, in reading this story. For our own mental health, we need the subject to care about doing acts of kindness, to trust, to want to return goodness to those who enabled her parents to survive. How might I "teach" hope? By encouraging the "false self" to recede, by helping a traumatized person to find an end to the running; by encouraging a "witness" to remember, even in the depths of pain, there are sparks of humanity.

Imelda and Me

A Hidden Child's Fancy Footwork

BY IRENE FRISCH

Several years ago, in the wake of the overthrow of the Marcos government in the Philippines, the media reported (among other curiosities) news about the shoe closet of the President's wife Imelda. On hundreds of shelves, arranged neatly, were literally thousands of pairs of shoes—all belonging to the Philippines' First Lady.

My husband joked, "She has almost as many shoes as you do." Reading the news story over his shoulder, I responded as might be expected—I didn't find Imelda's collection all that extravagant.

Though my husband and I are of modest means, it is true that I too, like Imelda, have a penchant for shoes. In fact, I have hoarded shoes for nearly 50 years: high heels and low, shoes for winter and summer, evening and daytime, boots as well as slippers, shoes for spring, shoes for fall. Many have not yet been worn, and some never will be.

Most recently I bought several pairs of shoes while on vacation in Europe, shopping with equal gusto at both the fanciest boutiques of Paris and the mercato flea markets of Italy. I just cannot pass in front of a shoe store without stopping in and discovering a particularly good buy.

I have also, over many years, perfected the art of slipping my purchases into my home undetected. In plain brown shopping bags, the shoes make it past husband and children, avoiding their "what, more shoes!!?!" interrogations. Before I was married, living with my parents, I did the same to avoid my mother's disapproving eye and comments.

But it wasn't until reading about Imelda that I began to really think about my history with shoes, about what they mean to me.

After largely comfortable years of early childhood in Poland, my life's good fortune was drastically reversed by the Nazi invasion. Being Jewish, I was forced to go into hiding in order to survive. A gentile woman rescued my mother and me, hiding us in her apartment for the duration of World War II.

"Maybe if I converted to Catholicism, I could acquire shoes."

I was 11 when I went into hiding, a girl of average size for that age. For three years I went barefoot, never leaving the apartment. My mother worked inventively to try to make my dresses longer and wider to accommodate my growing teenage body, but we never gave a thought to shoes.

By the time of liberation in 1945, though I was only 14, I was tall and full-grown: shoe size eight and a half. I was ready to re-enter normal life, to go to school again, except . . . I had no shoes.

My mother and I had no money at all, and no prospect of getting any in those months immediately following the war. I was so eager to resume school, however, that I went barefoot—which was intensely humiliating, as you might imagine, for a teenage girl. Most nights my dreams, during those difficult months, were about shoes—wearing them, acquiring them through luck or ingenuity, envying them. At one point I was so desperate that I hatched a serious plan: I would convert to Catholicism—surely a kind priest would reward me with shoes. (This was a 14 year old's valiant attempt at problem-solving.)

After many shoeless months my mother contacted, as a last resort, a wealthy gentile woman whose husband was once a friend of my father's. She obtained from her a pair of wooden platform shoes, actually just flat planks of wood, with nondescript ribbons across the top—a kind of a cross between stilts and geisha shoes. They were so unwearable that I wondered how the woman had been brought so low as to possess them—since even during the war her family had remained affluent. Of course I tried to accommodate my feet to these makeshift things (I was willing to wear anything), but no matter how hard I tried, I always fell out of them after a few steps. Clearly this woman did not have my mother's or my interests at heart.

By November the weather was growing seriously cold, and I was still barefoot. One day, however, my mother came home from work excited. From her odd jobs (helping people sell merchandise in the flea markets) she had finally

been able to save a little money. We could go to the market and buy shoes. In those post-War days, there were no real stores. All goods were sold in outdoor yards resembling today's flea markets, and most everything was second-hand.

Scouring the stands, I finally came to a stop in front of a pair of men's black shoes: size 10. This was it, I decided.

My mother protested, but to no avail. I was afraid that my feet would continue to grow, and I needed shoes that would last forever. Who knew if we might ever have enough money to buy another pair? After some haggling, my mother paid for them, and I walked home the happiest person in the world, carrying my shoes in my hands.

These shoes had to be saved only for school and special occasions (parties, dances, movies—we were teenagers, we tried very hard to "catch up," to lead normal lives). I polished them regularly. So that they wouldn't fall off my feet, I carefully lined the sides and bottoms of the shoes with folded cardboard, and stuffed the tips with rags. Still, they were so huge that I had to drag my feet; if I lifted them, the shoes would fall off. Nevertheless I felt like a ballerina.

Unfortunately, my joy was short-lived. After only a few days with my precious new acquisition I was diagnosed as having a serious joint disease in my feet and legs—a consequence of my many years of shoelessness. I was bedridden for several months. I contracted rheumatic fever with high temperatures; for weeks I had to crawl about on all fours to move around in our small apartment. My beautiful shoes lay next to the bed.

It took me a long time to recuperate (in fact, I've never fully recuperated). Medical conditions were primitive in Poland. I remember having to swallow awful-tasting pills that were so enormous they had to be broken into four pieces, their taste disguised in hunks of bread. My mother, though dreadfully worried, was unable to stay home with me because she had to work.

In time, our conditions improved. We moved many times—through Germany, Poland, Israel. Eventually we crossed the Atlantic. I have had good times and better-than-good times—but I still feel the unflagging need to buy shoes. Regardless of how many overflow from my closets, I always crave more.

I am, in general, a person who is quick to pass judgment on others, but for Imelda Marcos I have not an unkind thought. I am sure that behind all of her closets lined with all of their racks holding all of her shoes—there's a story and an explanation. Perhaps quite different from my own, but a story nonetheless. □

Irene Frisch, once a soldier in the Israeli army, is now a retired librarian living in Teaneck. She has just become a grandmother.

Julie Heifetz: When a Holocaust Writer Teaches About Shoes

Julie Heifetz-Klueh, 45, playwright, poet, non-fiction writer and therapist, is the author of one of the earliest works on hidden children, *Too Young to Remember: Oral History and the Holocaust.* She teaches writing and theatre arts in public high schools in St. Louis. Here is how Heifetz-Klueh would teach Irene Frisch's "Imelda and Me":

I would love to teach this story to high school students who are at risk, kids who come from stressed families, kids with learning problems, students who are identified as having "the cards stacked against them."

Because here is Irene Frisch's story—*she's* a kid at risk. I'd ask my students, 'What do the shoes symbolize?' We'd talk about all of Irene's losses—family, home, the out-of-doors, freedom of movement, safety, good food, friends, the ability to speak above a whisper, her own bedroom— how years later it doesn't quite work for Irene to recoup her losses through buying more and more shoes. Why? Because it's not just the shoes she needs to get back, it's so much more.

What's amazing about Irene, though—when you consider how scarred, how depressed, how fixated she might have been, given her years of deprivation—what's amazing is how staggeringly healthy and even jocular she is. So? She's got a lot of shoes! I'd say to my students, "You each have some of your own real problems—how do you handle them? What are your "shoes"?

The Holocaust represents, at its most fundamental level, the issue of loss—not just the loss of relatives, homes, status, but the loss of YEARS . . . years of education, years of opportunity, of parenting, of security. Irene felt the loss of years so acutely that she couldn't wait to go back to school, even with the humiliation of being barefoot. She couldn't wait, in her words, to be "normal" again, to "catch up." For high school kids at risk, this loss of years could really ring a bell. Irene survived—what do they make of that?

I'd have students read Irene's story to have them understand the Holocaust, too . . . not just their own lives. In order to comprehend the magnitude of such a horror, I'd ask kids to remember major losses of their own. I'd make this a writing exercise. Then I'd say to them, "Take that loss; exaggerate it a billion times—is that a holocaust?"

Please Papa: Help Me

A WEEK IN THE WARSAW GHETTO

BY BASIA, AS TOLD TO LIANE CLORFENE-CASTEN*

Warsaw Ghetto, Fall 1941

My family and I are squeezed into one room of a six room apartment—forced from our beautiful home. We can bring with us so little, just what can fit on the back of a flat cart. The Germans continue to round up Jews from the entire countryside: Soon six other families share our kitchen (so different from the one where my mother alone made our Shabbos dinner), and six other families share our bathroom (so different from the one right next to my own bedroom where I used to bathe in luxury whenever I chose).

All of us are focused on one thing: survival. Families are selling off their few remaining valuables just to buy a loaf of bread or a beet root.

I am overwhelmed by feelings of meanness. I hate these strangers who have been thrown on top of us. Do I allow myself these feelings, or do we all find a way to live together?

Papa cannot find any work. Mama (who used to have maids wait on her) gets a job working in a German food factory outside the ghetto. She peels potatoes all day and is sometimes able to get through the guards and bring home the peels to us. With just a bit of flour and water, we can make a meal.

My little brother Jacob coughs and coughs. Papa says to me, "You're my son, Basia; you're going to survive this. I know it. You're going to continue the line."

Warsaw Ghetto, Spring, 1942

I get the typhoid first, I think in October. I don't have any memory of the winter. Sometime in the spring I awake, though, in a new apartment. Our furniture is all gone—my parents have sold everything. They have aged and changed so much that at first I don't know who they are. Mama is disoriented, and doesn't know my name.

I am hemorrhaging. Papa turns me upside down. There are beautiful lights and a tunnel. I promise God I will give my first five dollars to charity if I only I live. The bleeding stops.

Once I feel stronger, I set about looking for bread. I meet some smugglers who ask me to set up a coffee concession in a basement. In exchange they give me some bread for lunch. I save half of it for my family. I know the Germans will kill me on the spot if they find me.

Soon Mama comes down with the same sickness as me. She throws up and can no longer work. This means no more potato peels. By now, half of the ghetto (frozen, starved, shot) is dead. After Mama dies, Jacob's coughing gets worse. Within a month, he is dead, too.

Warsaw Ghetto, Summer, 1942

The typhoid has seized my darling Papa. He tells me to sit down at his bedside. He tells me his life story, also where to find certain papers that will prove what property he owns, and how he had special papers to come to America but that Mama wouldn't allow him to go alone. "I'll never forgive your Mama for your pain," he tells me.

I run out, desperate to find a doctor. "Please, help me. I have no money, but I will give you my winter coat!" A doctor follows me back to our room, looks at my father and says simply, "Let him die in peace." Papa takes me in his arms; then he dies.

There is no time to mourn. A new family is piled into the room where I have watched my whole family die.

***Basia, an active volunteer with the Holocaust Memorial Foundation of Illinois, chooses not to be further identified. She is unable to write her story herself, but entrusts Liane Clorfene-Casten with it.**

Warsaw Ghetto, Fall, 1942

The Germans are rounding up whoever is left here. They come with their barking dogs and pull us by our clothing, pushing and dragging us into trucks. Many are shot on the spot. They tell us they are relocating us to a better place, with more food, but Dr. Lipmann (a friend of my family) is told by an underground informant that Jews are put into railroad freight cars and that no one comes back. Twenty-five of us (four families and a handful of teenage girls like me who have no one) decide to try to hide together.

The Germans evacuate half the block of Bergen Street in one day. We are certain they will evacuate the rest of the street the next day. Greta and I find a basement room in the building next door. What a gift! Everywhere there are dressers (that must have belonged to those who have already been taken away). I catch my skirt and have to push a dresser to free myself. Behind it I see another door.

"Greta. Come, quick!"

We open the door to blackness. I blink hard. We are in a room, perhaps 15 by 20 feet, and nothing is in it. God must have helped us find this.

Within half an hour, ten of us make our way down to this small, black hole. Little Felix, the doctor's son, is the last one in; he squeezes his tiny body through a bare crack in the door and then thrusts out his hand to pull the dresser leg back in its place. We sit in the airless cave and simply wait. If we put our heads down close to the floor, we can breathe better.

Eventually I feel that enough time has slipped by for a new day. I tell everyone I am going out to check. There is an eerie silence in the building. Upstairs, on both sides of the landing, doors are opened wide; no one is anywhere. Bits of clothing lay in heaps on the floor. A few pieces of paper remain on a table; cups are unwashed in a sink; chairs are tipped over. I don't need to see the other floors to know they are more of the same. Our little group spends all day foraging. Bands of German soldiers are picking up stragglers, either shooting them on the spot or forcing them into trucks. We duck in and out of doorways, jump across roofs, run up deserted stairways, scavenge through the remains of kitchens.

A miracle. I find two potatoes. Greta finds an old carrot; little Felix, able to sneak into barely opened windows, gets an onion. We silently cook up a little soup in the darkness of a deserted kitchen, then we divide up the portions equally and return to our hole.

After I put my head down on my jacket to sleep, I hear, "Basia. Get up now and leave this place."

The voice speaks to me with great clarity.

"Papa. I know it's you. Why are you telling me this? I can't go. I have no one. It's safe here."

"Get up, Basia. Leave this place now."

Greta hears me stand and she cries out, waking the others. I tell them I have to leave and whisper that anyone who wishes should join me. No one does; they tell me that I am walking into certain death. They beg me to stay, but I can't.

My hands feel the way. Don't disturb anything. Too dangerous. I tiptoe to an opened door. The whole ghetto is silent. I can dimly see down the street. No lights anywhere, just opened doors that bang in the night's cool breeze. Make no noise. This neighborhood has been my home for my seventeen years; I know every crack in every sidewalk. Now, though, where can I go? I am utterly alone.

Keep to side streets that have already been swept out. Find a bed—no, a corner. Beds carry someone's disease. I pass by my old grammar school and try a door. It's locked. Keep going. Go to Tante Elke's house—she was taken away last week. I turn the corner and freeze. Half way down the block is a band of SS. They have flashlights and dogs.

"Halt!" I hear two shots ring out. Something whizzes by my ear and pierces some mortar behind me. A chip lands in my hair.

"Cross the street, my child. Cross it quickly. There will be an open window."

I obey the voice and find the window. I plunge through the space, landing on a sharp pile of coal. I want to scream out, but pray instead that my panting will not be heard. A flashlight pierces the darkness, only it is high, over my head. I hear one soldier tell the others that it is probably just a dog or rat. They laugh. "No Jew rat here." Their feet march away. I try to sleep away my hunger.

After dusk, I make my way back to the basement on Bergen Street. The side door has been pushed open; the lock smashed. Oh God, no. I walk down the three steps and creep silently to the room with the furniture. The dressers and chifferobes are all shoved to either side, making a crooked path. Several dressers are upside down, the legs broken off. Our secret door is torn off its hinges. As I peer into the dark hole, I see nothing but Felix's little hat.

"Papa! What do I do now? Please, Papa, help me."

No voice speaks now. Safe or not, I cannot move from that little room. I put my head on top of Felix's hat and cry all night and day until my whole body aches. It is my second full day of nothing to eat.

By the next morning I have a plan. Several blocks away, there is a rich family that once owned a grocery store. The father is a member of the ghetto council, so maybe the family is still there—perhaps they will take me in to tutor their children. I dodge my way between the deserted buildings. I know the street well—it is on the way to my synagogue. I ring the doorbell and a return buzzer opens up the front door. Mrs. Sternberg is at the top of the stairs in a long, pale satin robe. She even wears lipstick and her hair is pulled back with a white bow. I beg her for a job.

"I know your children need looking after," I say. "I am well educated; I've been to private school. I can keep them safe. Let me help."

She looks at me with disgust. "You're so dirty. You must be sleeping in coal bins. And your hair. Please," her hand pushes at the air, "go away."

She doesn't even offer me a crust of bread. I sit paralyzed at the bottom of the stairs trying very hard not to cry: I can't waste the tears. I think, what would Papa tell me to do now—if I could hear him?

I go to Tante Elke's house, feeling somehow safer there than at my old apartment. One of the bathtub faucets is working. I take a freezing bath, scrubbing with only my hands. I am gone perhaps three hours, and then I go back to Mrs. Sternberg's with a body that is at least not so black.

I dare not ring the bell—surely she'll turn me away. So I move softly up the back stairs and peek through the window. The kitchen chairs have been thrown about; several pots are on the floor.

"No! No! Not again. It's so fast!"

The Sternberg kitchen is unlocked. The entire apartment is deserted. Silently I creep from room to room, each one still furnished with some measure of comfort. Didn't they sell anything? Gold drapes hang before opened windows; a lace cloth graces the dining room table. There are dolls in the girls' room. I haven't seen such luxury in years.

I find bread, two apples and two carrots. I eat slowly, fearful of what might happen should I eat too fast. How glorious! I save one carrot, one apple and the remaining piece of bread for later. Then I check their filled closets. "Why did the Germans take them?" I ask myself. "They were supposed to be protected."

In front of Mrs. Sternberg's bedroom closet is a mirror. For the first time in a week, I see myself. My God, who is this person? I go up close, examine the face, the nose. I check my eyes, then my teeth. I slowly unbutton my dirty blouse, unzip my torn skirt and let the foul clothing fall in a heap by my feet.

My body is so skinny, I look like twelve, not seventeen. My brassiere hangs. I take it off, drop it. My toe nails are black. My hair, although just watered down, is still streaked with soot. My thinness scares me.

At least I can wash with soap and hot water before I leave. I find some clothes that almost fit. I pull a belt tight

There is no time to mourn.

A new family is piled into the room where I have watched my whole family die.

around a brown wool skirt and pack some clothing into a bundle—sweaters and a jacket for winter.

At the bottom of the front stairs I see a girl hiding. It is Lise from my old neighborhood! We embrace, we cry. Lise thinks of a place to go.

The Germans are establishing some small "factories," and they need a few Jews to work there. Lise takes me to a factory that makes brooms—we are hired. There is a little food. I begin to believe that things are getting better.

United States, Spring, 1952

At the end of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, the Germans send me to Majdanek, a death camp. Perhaps I survive the slave labor because I survived typhoid earlier. Perhaps I survive because of Papa.

After the war, though I am now married, I decide to take my own life. My father's voice comes to me for the last time: "Basia, you must not kill yourself. You have a baby inside you—a son. Name him after me." Indeed, I was pregnant and didn't know it.

I arrive in the United States with a new baby—Moshe. I believe him to hold the soul of my Papa. □

Liane Clorfene-Casten is a freelance journalist specializing in environmental and education issues. Her expose on breast cancer will be published by Sierra Club Books in the fall of 1995.

Ellen Bass: When an Abuse Counselor Teaches the Holocaust

Ellen Bass, 47, is the well-known co-author of *The Courage to Heal,* the workshop "bible" for women survivors of childhood sexual abuse, as well as the co-editor of *I Never Told Anyone,* a compilation of testimonies from survivors of sexual abuse. Here is how Bass would teach Basia's *Please Papa: Help Me*:

I would use this story when I conduct weekend workshops on "Surviving Loss and/or Abuse." Basia is an expert on "coping strategies." She has a great deal to teach us.

I think the most extraordinary "coping strategy" in this chilling story is Basia's ability to receive the guidance of her deceased father as a "guardian angel," someone to hold her hand through virtual hell. She hears her Papa's voice during her most acute crises, and he "guides" her, telling her when to run, where to hide.

I would ask workshop participants: "Whose voice can *you* summon when you're in your most abandoned place?" Sometimes survivors do "hear" voices, but they are destructive or disempowering ones. I would suggest that we work to develop the other voices, those more loving. Basia's resourcefulness is a compelling model. When she can't "hear" her Papa's voice—when she's starving, sleeping on coal, hunted by Nazis—she can be just as strong through reciting, "What would Papa tell me to do now—if I could hear him?"

Another important lesson from this story has to do with luck. Survivors sometimes belittle luck if we have it, and if we don't have it, we often blame ourselves for what was truly out of our control. Do we feel entitled to our luck? Can we accept that our losses are not always due to our own failures? Sometimes we do our best, but still cannot escape bad things. Can we accept luck as part of our survival. That's one of the reasons that Basia's alive today. Finally, Basia finds a reason to live, because she's pregnant. She's carrying life against a backdrop of destruction; she interprets her pregnancy as a revisitation of her Papa, her "guardian angel." How can we work with Basia's model? Pregnancy is just *her* way—we can generate life in other ways, too: we can feed the hungry, plant a garden, be an AIDS buddy.

Basia couldn't write this story herself. We can choose to see an "incapacity" like this (of hers or ours) as a strength or as a weakness. I find it remarkable that she had the courage to find a way to share her story. By doing so, she offers us such a valuable resource.

Reading Basia's story, you may feel, as I did, that you would do all you could to help this brave and precious child. I would ask participants, "How can each of us remember that there are people who feel this way about us?"

Jewish/Female Dramatists:

Looking At Meshugas And Calling It "Family"

by Norine Dworkin

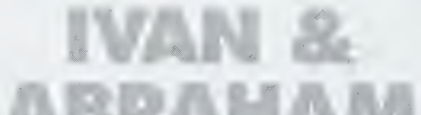
Female playwrights and screenwriters working with Jewish themes seem to be everywhere these days. Wendy Wasserstein, whose Sisters Rosenzweig *has had a long Broadway run, is probably the most known of these. Then there's Diane Samuels, 34, British playwright of* Kindertransport*; Yolande Zauberman, 36, French director and screenwriter of the Yiddish film* Ivan & Abraham*; Jenna Zark, 40, Minnesota playwright of two dramas collectively called* A Body Of Water*; and Sherry Glaser, from Queens, New York, playwright and solo actor in the long-running off-Broadway hit* Family Secrets.

What all of these artists have in common is a shared interest in one theme: family. Not the pretty, homogenized versions of idealized family that tells lies to us from magazines, theme parks, even mail order catalogues (and make the gap between fiction and reality even more painful), but REAL families, Jewish families—in all their frustrating complexity.

"I question the whole idea of a normal family," says Sherry Glaser of Family Secrets. *"I don't think there is such a thing. We're all in a sort of trap to be that 'normal' way or act that 'normal' way. When in reality, we're all struggling with how to just exist, how to survive, how to love. It's a difficult challenge."*

Classic playwrights (look at Eugene O'Neill's Long Day's Journey Into Night*, Arthur Miller's* Death of a Salesman*, Edward Albee's* Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, Samuel Beckett's* Endgame*) have always known that real families never live up to the hype—that beneath the glittering idealizations there's tarnish. The family in crisis has been, always, a veritable playground for artistic expression.*

Enter Glaser, Samuels, Zauberman and Zark, framing the mercurial and heterogeneous nature of families in their own artistic visions. They tackle the fundamental questions of family structure, style and attitude, plundering families' resident crises and joys to get a handle on what makes these time bombs that we call "family" tick. In the process, they stretch even further our understandings of kinship.



Many of these same issues surface in **Yolande Zauberman's** delightful Yiddish film, *Ivan & Abraham* (in which few of the actors are Jews, and all are reciting lines in a language they do not understand). *Ivan & Abraham* is currently making the rounds at independent film forums and Jewish centers. (It is also, by the way, a wonderful tool for teaching about Jewish life in Eastern Europe.) Set in a pre-war Polish shtetl where relations between Christians and Jews are strained at best, Zauberman examines the unlikely friendship between two young boys: Abraham, a Jew, and Ivan, a Christian apprenticing with Abraham's family.

Zauberman announces she'll be posing "cultural divide" and "who is my family?" questions in the very first scene. Before the audience even sees two boys carelessly lounging in bed (Zauberman flirts with homoerotic imagery here although she goes nowhere with it), we hear the words: "Show me your dick"—getting to the heart of the difference between the boys (not coincidentally also the difference between male Gentiles and Jews): circumcision. But differences can be overcome, Zauberman is going to go on to argue—acculturation may even mean survival.

It turns out that little Abraham is a reluctant Jew—one who would rather jump on the backs of wild horses than pray. He's a constant trial to his pious grandfather. When the grandfather vows to separate the two boys for good, Abraham rebels in the only way he knows how: He literally develops instead through the love granted by "outsiders." Replacing his dictatorial grandfather, Abraham finds a father-figure in a man who respects his horsemanship. And when the boys return to the shtetl and discover its destruction, it is Ivan who comforts a hysterical Abraham, whisper-

A touching moment between Mardoche (Alexandre Kaliaguine) and his daughter Rachel (Maria Lipinka).

cuts his ties with his people by shearing off his earlocks and discarding his caftan in favor of one of Ivan's sweaters. Dragging Ivan with him out of the shtetl, he turns his back on Jewish life in favor of adventures of his own making. It turns out to be a blessing after all: at the film's end the shtetl and all its inhabitants are tragically destroyed in a pogrom.

Within the buddies-on-a-road-trip part of this movie, Zauberman also inserts a female coming-of-age story: Abraham's sister, Rachel, defies her family's wishes too, and runs off with Aaron, the young man she loves. Originally betrothed to another, her ties are more completely severed even than Abraham's . . . for she allows her family to believe she's had sex with Aaron (even when she hasn't), so that she'll be formally "repudiated." Strong willed, Rachel slips the restrictive ties of her family and pursues her own objectives. Have sex with Aaron she does, finally, but only on her terms. It's Rachel who initiates the seduction, and her frank sexuality symbolizes her strength.

Zauberman, then, through the dual stories of Abraham/Ivan and Rachel/Aaron, gives us the same theme twice: the anger and frustration children can feel when their objectives conflict with their elders'. And in a film where blood ties are shown as largely oppressive, a sense of family ing that the two of them will always be together.

Zauberman also explores the dangers of clannishness, and the superstitions and ignorance inadvertently bred by enclaves simply by virtue of their isolation and insularity. Closed groups of this nature—both Jew and Gentile—don't fare well in Zauberman's movie. Transcending difference seems to be the only key, making connections outside the family. Only those who have bridged the cultural divide seem to survive—just look at who remains alive at film's end.

A BODY OF WATER

Sex is the great stumbling block for the characters of *White Days* and *Shooting Souls*, the dual dramas by **Jenna Zark** recently presented at New York's Circle Repertory under the title *A Body of Water*.

Mainstream New York reviewers almost unanimously praised this diptych for its bold female characters pushing at the boundaries of Orthodox Judaism in order to take control of their lives. This reviewer, however, disagrees. Zark could take a lesson from Zauberman about what constitutes a fem-

inist heroine, for her two characters' blinkered attitudes towards sexuality and autonomy ultimately compromise the integrity of these dramas.

White Days finds Sandy, the irreligious proprietor of a beauty salon, putting off her highly sexed Italian husband in bed. Is she having an affair? Nope. *She'd* simply like to initiate sex once in a while. So, without a word of explanation, Sandy begins to abstain from sex for the number of days during and after her period required by religious law, then sneaks off to the mikveh to ritually cleanse herself. Her puzzled husband is left wondering what went wrong.

GERRY WOODSTEIN

Sandy (Jodi Thelan) and her husband (Bruce MacVittie) in a scene from the NewYork production of "White Days," the first part of Jenna Zark's play "A Body of Water."

And so is the audience. Zark presents the intimate mikveh ritual (oddly taking the place of open communication between husband and wife), and then wraps the whole experience in some sexy, mystical fantasy in which Sandy imagines she's Bathsheba and her husband, King David. The mikveh, then, taken out of context and grafted onto a secular marital problem, becomes a barrier that precludes Sandy from actively taking control of her own body and setting the tone of her own sexuality—rather than a tool that, without manipulation, facilitates her self-determination. Why learn to vocalize one's own sexual desires when observant Judaism can be prescribed for having or not having sex?

Unwanted pregnancy is the subject of *Shooting Souls*, as a couple tries to fulfill the "one boy, one girl" mandate of Orthodox Judaism. With five sons already, the couple's life is being wrecked by this mandate. The protagonist, Devi, is no fool, though. She realizes she's sinking fast beneath religious prescription. What she wants is a rabbinical sanction to allow her to abort this baby she's now carrying, and permission to give up trying for the requisite girl. But when she approaches the rebbe, he obliquely refuses. "God gives us only what we can handle," he tells her. (Conveniently, he has no children of his own.)

Devi then embarks on a mild rebellion: She eats pork. Afterwards she vows that if this next baby isn't a girl, she will never try again. Suddenly her world rights itself, and everything feels okay.

Eating pork? Stopping after the next baby? Fragile rebellions. Margaret Sanger's earliest work with birth control was done on the Lower East Side—many of her first clients were Orthodox Jews. As for abortion, this concept isn't entirely unknown to religious Jews either.

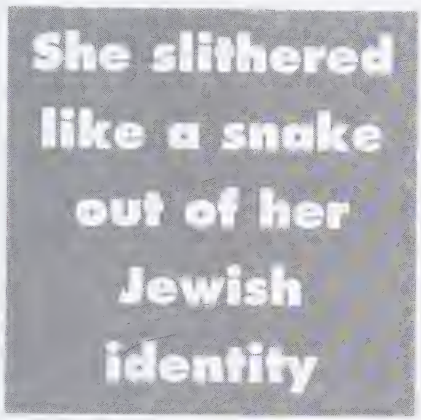
Birth control isn't the problem, though; the problem is Zark. Telling this story as a tragedy of religious fervor would be one thing; casting Devi as heroic is quite another. In truth, Devi comes off as merely foolish, needlessly punishing herself and endangering her family's welfare.

However, caught up in the mysticism, foreignness and family romance of ultra-Orthodoxy (Zark is not religious herself), Zark can't help but miss the individual tragedies that befall some of its followers.

KINDER TRANSPORT

Diane Samuels' *Kindertransport*, produced at Manhattan Theater Club this past spring, establishes family as the center of identity formation, suggesting that the start and finish of a Jewish child is the family in which she is raised.

The story of a little girl who escaped Hitler's Final Solution through the last-minute export of some 10,000 German children to foster families in Great Britain, *Kindertransport* is a tale of Jewish identity lost and subsequently found.



10-year-old Eva is sent to Great Britain and later adopted by the well-meaning British matron, Lil. Minus her parents' influence, she slowly loses touch with her Jewish culture until she eventually takes on a new name—Evelyn—gets baptized, and is fully acculturated into her new country.

In Evelyn's mind, being Jewish becomes something Other; something to be afraid of. When her biological mother, an Auschwitz survivor, comes to fetch her to emigrate to America, Eva/Evelyn refuses, saying, "I have a family here."

Breaking with her German/Jewish past (represented by some letters, official papers, a German fairy tale book, a Haggadah), Eva/Evelyn buries all of it deep in her attic. But the past continues to haunt her in the shape of a mysterious Pied Piper-like character from the fairy tale book, lurking in the shadows (the edges of her consciousness), reminding her of who she really is.

It takes Eva/Evelyn's own daughter, Faith, just coming of age herself, to bring these issues to the surface once more. Questions of self, family and country collide, and the underpinnings of both mother's and daughter's identities topple.

Still, the audience is led to understand that Faith will find her way back. When Eva/Evelyn finally hands her daughter the German storybook and the Haggadah from the attic—symbolic links to her past—Faith eagerly scoops them up. "I'm going to find out everything," she vows.

Beyond conveying how the Holocaust shattered the lives even of those who escaped concentration camps, *Kindertransport* shelters a modern commentary on the essence of family. How is family determined—by the providers of sperm and egg, or by the providers of necessities after birth? It's a pertinent discussion for today's audiences when surrogate motherhood is on the rise; when a child switched with another at birth chooses the father she knows rather than her own blood relatives; when reproductive technology can now harvest eggs from a variety of sources—mothers, sisters, even female fetuses (who essentially create their own grandchildren or siblings)—for fertilization in another's womb.

Although on the one hand the playwright accuses Eva/Evelyn of slithering out of her Jewish identity like a snake shedding its skin, she also, more provocatively, poses the kinds of questions that go to the very crux of one's identity, making room for a broad interpretation of kin. When Eva/Evelyn rails at her adopted mother for aiding her dissociation from her past, Lil sharply counters with, "I was with you and I put up with you and I stuck by you. That's what mothering is all about. Being there when it counts."

A challenging look at yet another conundrum posed by tragedies like the Holocaust: What is a "saved" child? Is there a generation down the line in which DNA, roots and nurture are finally reconcilable?

FAMILY SECRETS

Perhaps nowhere is the frustrated schism between real families and idealized ones better dramatized than in **Sherry Glaser's** phenomenally funny solo show, *Family Secrets*, playing as a long run at New York's Westside Theater.

Woven of five distinct monologues, each from a different character's point of view, *Family Secrets* is a rich, bittersweet tapestry of suburban Jewish family life that explores the many subtexts—psychosis, homophobia, aging, bulimia, date rape, intermarriage—lurking deep beneath this middle-class family's seemingly happy exterior.

The first monologue belongs to the father figure, Mort, the Bronx-born accountant so satisfied with his humdrum life, he can't imagine why anyone would want anything different. And, of course, "different" is what he gets. And the conflicts fly.

There's his "baby" daughter, a heavy metal fanatic with a serious case of bulimia, who's so hungry to be recognized by the "in" crowd that she lets herself be date-raped by the drunken boy of her dreams. There's the other daughter,

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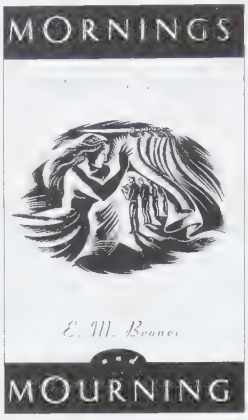

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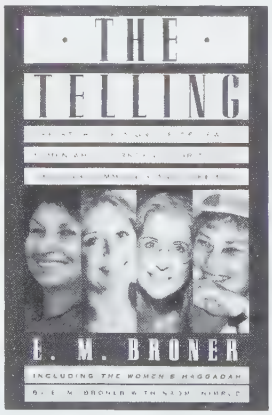

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Fern, the New Age convert who changes her name to Kahari, flirts with lesbianism and has a baby with a Latino "trans-channeler."

There's Mort's wife, Bev, who suffers a nervous breakdown trying to be the perfect wife and mother, but who ultimately has the last laugh, for she rights herself and goes to law school. And, lastly, there's Rose, the offbeat bubbe whose exegesis on the origins of "Hava Negila" (the lady of the house greeting guests with a plate of "negilas" .... Have one, please) is just too precious.

As hilarious and seamlessly constructed as every character is, each monologue manages to rip the family fabric a little more, until it lies, in the end, in tatters about the stage. Nothing is as it "should be"—which is exactly as it really is.

Wonderfully wacky, there's a reason bubbe Rose's incarnation comes last in Glaser's play. The least angst-ridden of all the family members, along with incontinence, flatulence, and the rediscovery of romance in the twilight of her life, Rose offers hope for a greater understanding of family intricacies. To her, EVERYBODY is *mishpocheh* and should come for Pesach.

"If we didn't have family," Rose tells the audience at the end, "we'd all be strangers. That's family—no matter what you do, you can't get rid of them." □

Norine Dworkin is a freelance writer living in Brooklyn

The huppah Quilting Bee

A Clip-and-Save Wedding Project

by Susan Schnur

When Sharon Goldman and Sandy Edry began planning their wedding, they decided to pay special attention to their huppah. They wanted—somehow—to end up with a Jewish ritual object that would (in their written words to guests), "hang over our heads during our ceremony, be displayed during our reception, and also, we hope, be a wonderful heirloom that will be a part of our household for many years to come."

And so they began their huppah journey by contacting several official New York huppah artists. "These artists work in silk, twine, a tallit, anything you want," explains Sharon. "They charge between $1000 and $3000, and think up a whole concept for the huppah. I realized that I already knew my design idea—squares on a grid, a kind of community 'quilt.' We didn't need a huppah artist; we just needed someone who could sew a quilt together."

Luckily, Sharon's mother, Marilynn Goldman (who sewed clothes for her children when they were small) volunteered for the task. Mother and daughter practiced standing under imaginary huppahs and juggling squares around on grid paper. They decided upon a huppah that would be 6'x6', comprised of 30 squares (11" each), with a big square in the center (20"x20") embossed with the bride and groom's Hebrew names and the wedding date.

Next, Sharon and Sandy mailed 30 small squares of cotton fabric to close friends and family to decorate as they saw fit. In a loving letter they advised: "Take heart. We are aware how busy people are, and how levels of creativity differ. Here are guidelines to make this task as easy as possible. We truly hope that this is not an inconvenience. It's just that you are the people that we treasure most in our lives, and we really want you to be a special part of our wedding."

Guidelines (derived from Sharon and Marilynn's educational safaris to fabric stores) included, says Sharon, "explaining the possibilities—photo transfer, liquid embroidery, fabric pen, iron-on appliqué. Only one taboo: NO GLUE. We wanted to make sure we could dry-clean the huppah; that it would last a lifetime."

As finished squares began arriving by return mail, Sharon, Sandy and Marilynn got excited. Sandy's mother, moved by what she considered to be a holy task, took one square and divided it into quadrants for Sandy's young half-siblings to work on. Orthodox cousins in Israel,who were pleased to be included, took Sharon aback by enjoining her, on their square, to remember to practice the laws of family purity.

A best friend of Sharon's from kindergarten taught herself embroidery specifically for the occasion, and another best friend (who got married a few weeks before the Goldman/Edrys) used fabric paints to cartoon a version of all four nuptial partners under one huppah.

The bride's California grandmother ("the afghan-crocheter") sewed a tiny woolen afghan on her square, while Sharon's other grandmother ("the Florida knitter") affixed two miniature matching knitted sweaters for bride and

groom. Says Sharon, "There was no question about what my grandmothers would do, and that was nice."

Sharon's father, a collector of El-Al memorabilia (no kidding), went to a T-shirt store and heat-transferred a picture of an El-Al plane flying over Tel Aviv which reads in Hebrew, "The path to success."

The groom's father used his square to reproduce a short story that Sandy (the writer-to-be) had composed at age seven, while another "writer"-inspired offering came from the groom's dear friend who had been editor-in-chief of the college paper while Sandy had been number two. On the huppah, the friend photo-transferred the masthead, generously reversing their two names for posterity.

A close friend of Sharon's from Israel cut up a folk embroidered purse of hers that Sharon had always admired, and two of Sandy's friends, feeling artistically intimidated, commissioned a professional artist to do their exquisite square—the Jerusalem Temple on a wedding ring, encircled by Hebrew text.

Finally, Sharon's sister, a physical anthropologist, painted her square with two pre-modern monkeys and the inscription: "Two cercopithecoids sitting in a tree . . " [k-i-s-s-i-n-g]. Sharon's close friend since her bat mitzvah—her dog Minnie—used her square (a traditional Amish 'wedding band' patch) as backdrop for a signature paw print.

The most gratifying moment for Sharon came the week before the wedding. Twenty or so family and closest friends arrived at Sharon's parents' house for a "huppah quilting bee." Around bagels and pasta salad, the ever-shifting group spent hours sewing around each square, securing batting, and giving the huppah, in Sharon's words, "that quilty, puffy look."

> **"The males were supposed to participate but they caught Fear-of-Sewing Disease."**

"It was a wonderful afternoon of communal surround," says Sharon. "My grandmothers were there, my mother and mother-in-law, my aunt and cousin, Sandy's little half-siblings, my three best friends, my sister. The males were supposed to participate, too, but they contracted Fear-of-Sewing disease, so they watched T.V. in the other room. Sandy actually did a few stitches but then ran away when we started talking about makeup. Actually, I was happy that it ended up being a female thing."

"It was great to feel how devoted our family and friends were to the project. My girlfriends sewed for hours and hours. The huppah was wonderful to look at as it developed, so a lot of people stopped by just to look."

In the letter that Sandy and Sharon had months earlier sent to their closest family and friends they wrote, "We hope that when the squares come back we will have memories to last forever. We love you all and can't wait for you to dance at our wedding!" □

Quilted memories: a wedding canopy.

Sharon Goldman Edry is happy to share her huppah-making hokhmah [wisdom] with others. She can be contacted at: 224 Riverside Dr., Apt. 7B, NY, NY 10025. 212-663-1864.

THE PARADOX OF FEMALE KNOWLEDGE

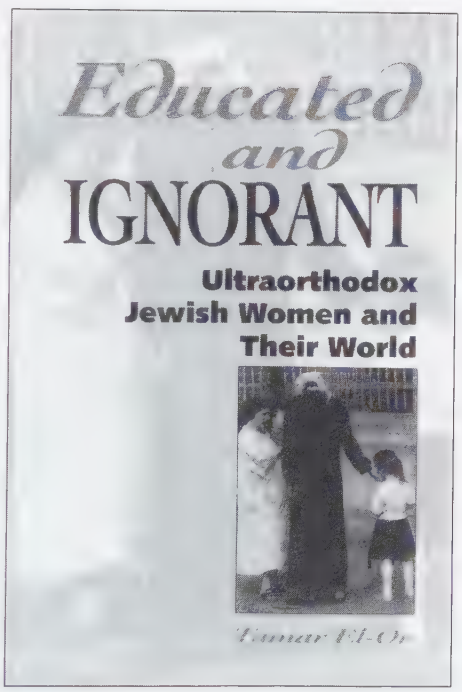
EDUCATED AND IGNORANT
by Tamar El-Or; translated by Haim Watzman [Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1994, hard $42, soft $17.95]

Tamar El-Or's ethnography of Gur Hasidic women begins with a yearning for connection. Encountering a Gur woman in a doctor's office, El-Or, an Israeli anthropologist, enters a tentative dialogue that eventually leads her into the uneasy embrace of a Gur Hasidic development near Tel Aviv. In a slim book translated from the Hebrew, the secular El-Or conveys her reading of Gur Hasidic society, with the premise of focusing on the paradoxes inherent in Hasidic women's education.

Setting out to study the phenomenon of ultra-Orthodox women spending their precious free time attending classes, El-Or seems to be hankering after the answers to a few basic questions: What is these women's attitude towards their own capacity to learn? And what do they indeed learn? The first step for El-Or, of course, is gaining admittance into Gur society. The stories of the women she encounters along the way read like myths to the secular eye: There is the woman who was expelled by her family for marrying someone from a different sect, the man who agreed to marry a woman after asking her responses to three carefully chosen questions. Indeed, the ways in which El-Or's subjects conceptualize and phrase their own lives alone make Educated and Ignorant worth reading. The insularity of these lives is astonishing; it is common, for example, for women to grow up in one Israeli city and never see any other.

El-Or's central argument regarding Gur women's education is based upon a quotation from the late Rabbi Avraham Yosef Wolf, founder of the Beit Ya'akov College for Girls in the Israeli town of Bene Berak: "If we succeed in instilling in our girl students that the purpose of their studies is to aspire to emulate our matriarchs, who did not study, then we have succeeded in educating our daughters." Pivoting off this unusual concept, El-Or argues that, in order to accomodate the paradoxes of Gur life, "Educated women are taught to be ignorant, so that they may succeed in living as educated and ignorant."

Where precisely El-Or intends to take this argument is often a bit hazy, but the experiences she reports are certainly fascinating. Some of El-Or's most



interesting source material is drawn from a haredi newspaper which regularly features extensive write-in debates on the advisability of educating women. (Opinions range from vociferous statements that the education of women is fundamentally harmful and that study during the time of menstruation is clearly improper, to arguments that education is beneficial in that an educated woman will have a greater appreciation of her husband's learning, and therefore will be more willing to make the financial and social sacrifices necessary so that he can devote himself full-time to his

Torah Leftovers?

Hannah suddenly interrupted and asked: "And if we mention something about the weekly Torah portion, is that a transgression?"

The room was silent. The women waited to see how the discussion between the teacher and Hannah would go. The *rabbanit* responded: "Why talk of things that will never happen? You're sitting down by the fence, your 'jewels' are running between your legs, one climbs up and one falls down, here one is crying and here another one comes to say something to Mommy—and women will speak words of Torah?"

"If we think words of Torah we'll also speak them." Hannah's cheeks redden, perhaps a sign that she knows she has said something unconventional, that she has challenged the *rabbanit*.

"Even talk about material things is preparation for words of Torah, if that's your intention," interjected one of the women. "If you accept your role as a woman, then you have something to talk about—thank God—without getting caught up in slander. How to avoid yelling at the children, what to do with leftovers, the children's health problems, that sort of thing."

***—excerpted from a Gur Hasidic women's class, in Tamar El-Or's* Educated and Ignorant**

studies.) The newspaper is full of moralistic tales about the decadent lives of secular Israeli women—exaggerated dialogues meant to hammer home the absolute moral corruption of a woman who attends a health club and uses a microwave to heat store-bought dinners for her husband.

And from the women themselves? El-Or attends some of the women's classes in the Gur community, and records the exchanges. "How will we actually study, given that we are women?" asks one teacher rhetorically of her students. "We will be like poor people given permission to walk through the court of a king. We will gather up the leftover food, enjoy the splendor and beauty of the garden, pick up what we find in the courtyards." 'Ask your husband' is one of the most persistently heard refrains. Most lessons begin with a disclaimer: "We do not study in order to make rulings, that's for men, and we want that to be clear."

One of El-Or's most interesting observations has to do with the content of women's classes—the preponderance of practical lessons (like how to remove worms from cauliflower to prevent accidental transgressions of kashrut) seems to indicate a deliberate avoidance of deeper issues. Abstract discussion is blocked by teachers. "During the course of lessons, interpretations become ever more insistently simplistic," notes El-Or. "Women's education levels questions of morality, faith, and justice into instructions for action in daily life."

El-Or notes intriguingly that when haredi society is threatened by outside attractions, it often turns to the education of women as a means of strengthening community solidarity. But during times that haredi life in Israel is relatively secure (for example, now) the focus turns to men's studies. In the early state period of Israel, women's education was used as a tool to compete with Zionism and Socialism for the hearts of idealistic Jews. Today, however, El-Or tells us, "study by women must be kept under control."

Indeed, the Gur women we encounter in these pages seem on average more than reconciled to their restrictions; the extent of

"Today, study by Hasidic women must be kept under control."

their agency, it appears, is to try to ascertain where limits are so that they can be better watchdogs over themselves.

Among the frustrating elements of *Educated and Ignorant* is the fact that even in this ethnography devoted to haredi women, the majority of opinions we hear are those of men—whether through newspaper editorials or by way of wives who quote their husbands. The language, too, is at times stiflingly technical for the lay reader.

For readers seeking a personal reaction to the situation of haredi women, *Educated and Ignorant* will disappoint; El-Or's academic stance cannot compete with the richness of Vanessa Ochs' *Words on Fire* or Lis Harris' *Holy Days*. We never know how El-Or experiences her time as a secular Israeli woman in the Gur community. And after seeing El-Or's subjects silenced by rabbinical discourse and watching them repeatedly silence themselves for the sake of 'modesty,' it is disturbing to read on as their voices are further muffled by the very anthropological framework that intends, ostensibly, to showcase them.

Still, Educated and Ignorant contains a wealth of information on a community that seems exotic to the secular reader, while it explicitly avoids voyeurism. (For this El-Or is to be commended.) There are lively and interesting segments on the economics of the haredi family, on the encounters of the haredi community with secular Israeli police, on the fractured politics of the Israeli ultra-Orthodox world, and on the increasing uses of 'modesty' to chastise women: to "turn each woman into a target of evaluation and judgement, and [expose] her to the danger of slander." In a final statement on Israeli society, El-Or issues a challenge to secular Israelis to reclaim religious culture.

All in all, this book provides an important, much-needed perspective from an Israeli academician.

–Rachel Kadish

THE MARRIAGES OF JACOB: A POEM-NOVELLA by Charlotte Mandel [Micah Publications, 1991, $10]

In *The Marriages of Jacob*, Charlotte Mandel takes the story etched finely on the surface of Genesis, and weaves about it a mesh of complex and real characters. The result is both original and beautiful.

Mandel's cycle of poems begins at a moment of profound loss: Leah is about to be married to Jacob in place of the promised Rachel, and the bond that has always existed between the two sisters is about to be rent

Publish, or Change Diapers?

One of the gifts that struggling mothers most appreciate is a tidbit about how some other woman was a "late bloomer." In the extraordinary book, *With Teeth in the Earth: Selected Poems of Malka Heifetz Tussman* [Wayne State University Press, Detroit, Michigan, 1992], editor/translator Marcia Falk mentions—generously—that the Yiddish writer Malka Tussman did not publish her first book of poems until she was over fifty. Before her literary emancipation, Tussman urgently penned the following:

I write poetry, read a great deal. Prophets, Psalms, Song of Songs, Job, Ecclesiastes. Shakespeare, Goethe, Byron, Blake, Baudelaire, Rimbaud. Whitman and Rimbaud open my up to Myself, give me freedom of movement within the rhythm of my own being, my own breathing.

I am loved—
I am a wife—
I am a mother—
I want to scream—I want to run—I want to cry—And I do what I have to do, and in between poems break through.

—Susan Schnur

orever. "Silence veils this bride/ no less an her lowered hood." Leah, torn from her eloved sister, is sent into the arms of a man ho does not love her; Rachel, proud and esperate, can never completely overcome e anguish caused by her father's trickery. the intricate cycle of poems that makes up is collection, Mandel presents image after nage of the often bitterly entwined lives of

"The lie Rachel told to her father becomes, in retribution, truth."

se two sisters. The end of the closeness tween Leah and Rachel becomes vitable—for their dependence on Jacob's or allows for no further unity. "Tremble boiling tea/ scalds Leah's hands./ Since day of Rachel's birth,/ but for these en nights,/ the two have slept as twins." m this moment, the women will dream l fear separately, and live their lives in tual competition.

Whether she is dealing with the ationship of Rachel and Leah or the eraction between Jacob and Laban, ndel's writing is marked by a complex chological grasp of character. In ndel's version of Genesis, the angel with m Jacob wrestles is the specter of his ther Esau. As Jacob gazes at the anted Leah, the forces that keep him n his beloved Rachel and the troubled cy of his birthright merge: "He stares anger/ into [Leah's] pale blue eyes,/ the ter's eyes of redhaired Esau,/ his her." Leah is irritant and victim, isolated reluctantly beloved. "Leah shrinks n Jacob's fists/ clenched at the edge is dream/ where he wrestles naked/ another man, twin,/ with hairy s and chest . . . in the distance—/ a pitched/ razoring scream/ of a riven hal/ or a woman."

And Rachel? In Mandel's vision she is ss tormented, blind to anything but the rred childlessness that is made all the more shameful by her sister's triumphant fertility. "Rachel tightens knots at the loom/ and will not touch [Leah's children's] grimy/ dimpled fists, or smile/ into their shining/ eyes dark as Jacob's."

Mandel's poems move us through the pregnancies of the sisters and the cycles of their desperate jealousies. Some of her most powerful scenes recount Rachel's supplications to her idols for fertility, or the chants of midwives while Leah labors. The handmaids Bilhah and Zilpah, beautifully alive and three-dimensional in Mandel's text, sing to their multiple gods and goddesses as Rachel and Leah sing to their one ("through the warp of living sinews,/ four women weave like vines/ pliant, binding, thirsty").

Mandel picks a sure-footed path among the spaces left by the biblical text. A pregnant Rachel imagines the face of her own mother, who died giving birth to her; after Rachel has deceived her father, hiding her stolen idols in her saddlebags and claiming she cannot rise because of her menstrual pains, her ill-fated pregnancy with Benjamin takes its turn for the worse: "Her face grows gaunt on the journey,/ limestone white./ Only Meyaledet knows she pads herself,/ staining untimely,/ as though the lie told to her father/ becomes, in retribution, truth." At moments, Mandel's sensibility is perhaps more reminiscent of the magical realism of Gabriel Garcia Marquez than of the sparseness of Genesis.

Mandel's poem-novella makes tangible the archetypical treacheries of Genesis. "We are a family of brittle gifts," says Jacob. And it is in this phrase that the tremulous beauty of Mandel's vision is distilled. What Mandel has accomplished in *The Marriages of Jacob* is not to be overlooked: bringing us from the marriage of Jacob and Leah to the death of Rachel on the road to Efrat, this book is a raw, multivocal rendition of a familiar story. The unity and rending apart of these women, their jealousies and joys and pains, form a feverish and emotionally compelling biblical landscape. Mandel's Leah and Rachel, her Bilhah and Zilpah and Jacob, are anything but two-dimensional, making The Marriages of Jacob startling to read, memorable, often breathtaking.

—*R.K.*

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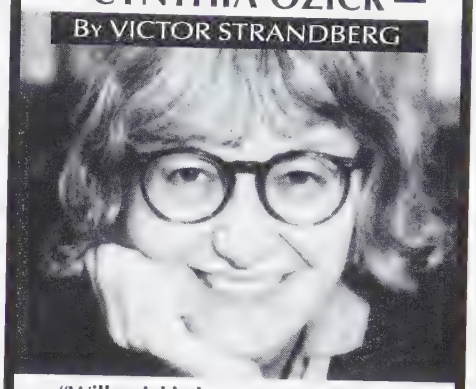
— CYNTHIA OZICK —

BY VICTOR STRANDBERG



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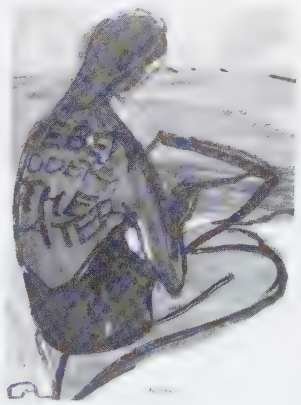

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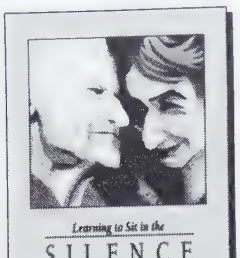

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THE KOSHER PIG: AND OTHER CURIOSITIES OF MODERN JEWISH LIFE by Richard Israel [Alef Design Group, 4423 Fruitland Ave., L.A., CA 90058, 1993, $18.95].

Richard Israel begins this book (of 20 republished essays) by invoking the memory of a "personal growth" group that he was once a part of in the 1960's. The group spent an intense summer together (actually they spent two intense summers together, but that taxes credulity now that it's the 1990's), and Israel recalls how each time the Sabbath rolled around, he felt increasingly alienated from everyone else—because he was a Jew. Eventually Israel starts to privately steam about his isolation, obsessing that "there were large pieces of me that the group knew nothing about."

"Each of the group members had a significant and often hidden characteristic that made them feel as different and separate as my Jewishness made me feel."

When he finally, one evening, detonates at the group with a tirade about their total blindness to his reality, "It became very quiet in the room." The man sitting next to Israel then starts talking about how no one in the group has ever noticed his "secret" disability—one of his legs is shorter than the other, and how, "because of that, I always felt that I was very different from the rest of you." Another person confesses to how inadequate he feels because he was brought up, and remains, a rural bumpkin, while everyone else in the group is citified. A woman with an accent discloses how weird it has been for her to have no one mention that she's obviously foreign-born—the true outsider in the group.

"To my astonishment," writes Israel, "each of the group members had a significant and often hidden characteristic that made them feel as different and separate as my Jewishness made me feel." He concludes: "I have observed the same phenomenon in every group I have ever been in. Just about everyone feels less a part of every group than everyone else. . . . What may be most different about Jews is that we seem to have taken a nearly universal experience and raised it to the level of a theology, a theology of particularism."

This story comprises only the first three pages of Israel's lively book, yet most authors would have taken its themes and carried on for chapters (tomes, lifetimes). Israel, however, wears his insights lightly, little day packs. By page four he has strolled on, genial and picaresque, into a narrative about what he calls his "terminal Jewishness," and from there to the story of the Jew who travels compulsively and unhappily between Poland and Israel, Poland and Israel. (The immigration officer finally asks him, "You're not happy in Poland so you travel to Israel. You're not happy in Israel so you travel to Poland? So where are you happy?" "That's easy," answers the man. "When I'm traveling.")

Mostly, Israel's essays cover the same territory—the homely tensions inherent in being both a Jew and a modern American. As he peregrinates from one sensible, funny thought to the next, his work (like Laurie Colwin's or Frank O'Hara's) distinctive for how totally it reeks of pleasure—both the giving of it and the taking. Israel's writing radiates such shocking good sense and intellectual honesty (in real life, he's a vintage Hillel rabbi) that one imagines these traits having brought him, over time, significant tzoris.

In his "Kosher Pig" essay, Israel shares halakhic stumpers that have been chucked his rabbinic way over the years: "My family keeps our home strictly kosher for Passover which includes getting rid of all leavening begins one *shylah* to the rabbi. "I have a yeast infection. May I go home for Pesach?" In another essay, "How to Survive Your Synagogue," Israel ponders whether it's reasonable to expect your shul to "provide you with a spiritual iron lung." (The answer is no; it's a great question.)

In "How to Give A D'var Torah: A Beginner's Guide," Israel totally wins the reviewer's heart by advancing the doghouse point of view that "standard Chassidic commentaries leave me cold, particularly

ney explain the human and divine psyche n terms of the *Sephirot*, the Kabbalistic ystem which tries to show how an infinite God is able to relate to a world of finite natter. I never like the way they dissolve ne text and de-historicize it to make it nean something altogether different from vhat it says." Israel ends his Sephirah-ashing characteristically: "Friends whose udgment I otherwise trust tell me that I am vay off-base in this matter and there is very ch material to be found in these sources. I m not so sure, but perhaps you shouldn't ike my word on this one."

A charming storyteller, sometimes silly, rael is a thinker whose emotional attack is ean—never hitting an affective note too narp or flat. He's also oppositionally aughty, with logic that's achingly tractive, and a moral pitch that's perfect. ierkegaard asserted that the fundamental uality of a spiritually whole person is ransparency," and that's the quality, ove all else, that comes through in these says.

Okay, so I have a crush on Richard rael.

–Susan Schnur

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Tsirl Waletzky

JEWISH WOMEN'S LITERARY JOURNAL LAUNCHED

By the Jewish Women's Resource Center

If you liked SARA'S DAUGHTERS SING . . . people all over the country have been nudging us at our poetry readings: "Nu, when are you getting out the sequel?" The sequel, dear readers, is THE JEWISH WOMAN'S LITERARY ANNUAL. As good as the Georgia Review, but appearing once a year, written and edited by Jewish women. The first issue will be out December 1994 to celebrate the Centennial of our dear mother, National Council of Jewish Women New York Section. Established voices like those of Alicia Ostriker and Enid Dame have contributed work and work in progress. New voices in fiction, poetry and prose essay forms sing out at the start of their literary careers.

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THE CHALLENGE OF FEMINIST BIOGRAPHY edited by Sara Alpern, Joyce Antler, Elisabeth Israels Perry, and Ingrid Winther Scobie (University of Illinois Press, 1992) $44.95; p.b. $14.95

This collection of essays by some of the brightest stars in feminist scholarship is intended as "a workshop in print to inform and encourage those interested in the writing and reading of biography and especially in the biographical construction of modern women's lives." Scholars discuss the process of writing biographies of women subjects, among them Florence Kelley, Emma Goldman, Belle Moskowitz.

SEX & SENSIBILITY: REFLECTIONS ON FORBIDDEN MIRRORS AND THE WILL TO CENSOR by Marcia Pally (The Ecco Press, Hopewell, NJ, 1994) p.b. $11.00

Do erotic and violent images in the media cause violence or sexism in real life? No, writes Marcia Pally. Rather "the idea that what happens in fantasy happens in life is neither science nor feminism—but voodoo." The author, a founder of Feminists for Free Expression, an organization argues that the solution to bad speech is more (good) speech, not the forbidding of speech. An intelligent contribution to our often emotional debates on the topics of book banning, protecting minors from pornography, responding to hate speech on college campuses, alleviating sexual harassment in the workplace, etc.

WORLDS OF JEWISH PRAYER: A FESTSCHRIFT IN HONOR OF RABBI ZALMAN M. SCHACHTER-SHALOMI edited by Shohama Harris Wiener and Jonathan Omer-Man (Jason Aronson, Northvale, NJ, 1993) $35.00

In dialogue with God, or in search of such a dialogue, 47 rabbis, teachers, and scholars —one third of them women—share their understandings of prayer. This book, dedicated to Schachter-Shalomi, a teacher who is both steeped in the mystical traditions of East European hasidism as well as in spiritual post-modernity, presents inspring and varied essays to return to time and again.

LIFECYCLES by Rabbi Debra Orenstein (Jewish Lights Publishing, 1994) $24.95

A strength of this anthology, part one of a proposed trilogy, is its scope. Orenstein has collected here a full sampling of lifecycle events of women—those personal markers for which we have had almost no appropriate liturgies or prayers or rites: loss of a pregnancy or a spouse; the termination of a marriage or of menses; conception, childbirth, weaning and more. These are lifecycle rituals created by women, or adapted by them, out of Jewish sources, and one of the pleasure of this volume is the diversity of voices, lifestyles, ages and backgrounds these worthy informants represent. The effect is choral, and most welcome.

TO PAINT HER LIFE: CHARLOTTE SALOMON IN THE NAZI ERA by Mary Lowenthal Felstiner (HarperCollins, 1994) $27.50

Charlotte Salomon, whose self-portrait appears on LILITH's cover, painted the autobiography of a middle-class German Jewish artist in the years before—and during—the Holocaust. She was murdered by the Nazis in 1943, at 26, and her artistic legacy, left in a manuscript called *Life or Theater?*, forms the basis of this book.

Salomon's artistry, using overlays of tissue, which enrich the tale and hold the narrators commentary is paralleled by her biographer's layered and complex and thoroughly wonderful recreation of a personal and social history created out of Salomon's text, careful historical research and extraordinary interviews with surviving family members, friends and classmates. One example of this biographer's art? Felstiner looks closely at the fractured glossy surface of the lives led by all middle-class Jewish women in Weimar—whose suicide rate, Felstiner discovers, was many times that of the general population! She suggests that because they were the best-educated females of their time and place, and because bourgeois codes dictated that they stay put at home, their frustration and emptiness drove them to kill themselves even in the decades before Hitler decided that they should die.

WOMEN IN PRAISE OF THE SACRED: 43 CENTURIES OF SPIRITUAL POETRY BY WOMEN, edited by Jane Hirshfield [HarperCollins Publishers, 1994; $22.50].

An anthology of spiritual poems prayers, and songs from the pen (cuneiform tools, Zen brushes, pokeberr ink quills) of 70 women. Contributor range from the world's earliest identifie author (a Sumerian moon priestess, 230 B.C.E.), through the 7th century B. C. H Sappho, the 11th century Izumi Shikibu the 16th century Teresa of Avila, Emil Dickinson, an anonymous Osage woma and the 20th century Gabriela Mistral. Il the "Jewish women" corner, there are thre entrants: Nelly Sachs, Kadya Molodowsk and the lusty female author (known only a "the shulammite") of the Song of Song Painstaking, intelligent, a little on th overcontrolled side (for those whos spirituality leans more towards hig mischief), these collective verses compris an important and remedial siddur.

GENDER AND TEXT IN MODERN HEBREW AND YIDDISH LITERATURE, edited by Naomi B. Sokoloff, Anne Lapidus Lerner, and Anita Norich [The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1993; $35].

Nine essays, by scholars of Yiddi and/or Hebrew literature, apply femini thinking to specific Jewish text Contributors include Kathryn Hellerstei Janet Hadda, Ilana Pardes and An Golomb Hoffman. Essays range fro "Female Adolescence and the Holocaust the Fiction of Ahron Appelfeld," throu "The Influence of Decadence on Bialik Concept of Femininity," "Why Was The No Women's Poetry in Hebrew Befc 1920?," "A Journey from 'I' to 'Self' Yiddish Poems by Women"; and lit. crit. the poets Esther Raab and Yocheved B Miriam. Three additional personal essa (by the Yiddish novelist Chava Rosenfa and the Hebrew novelists Ruth Almog a Amalia Kahana-Carmon) are honest, toug minded and moving. The book includes r bibliographies. A must-have for any seric Jew who calls herself a woman.

Debbie Friedman's Bubbe Book

Debbie, the internationally known composer and singer, is editing an anthology about Jewish grandmothers (including her story about her own Bubbe).

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JOIN LILITH'S JEWISH WOMEN'S TALENT BANK!

Too often, the media and Jewish organizations do not know how to access the expanding pool of Jewish women who have expertise in fields ranging from AIDS to Zionism. LILITH is developing annotated files on women who can serve as lecturers, resources, programming specialists and scholars. Such activities have always been a part of LILITH's mission. For the past 18 years LILITH has functioned as a national resource center on Jewish women's issues for individuals, organizations and the media, both Jewish and general.

When we have your material on file, we will be able to use it in answering queries we receive from the press, from conference planners in the Jewish community, and from other nonprofit organizations.

Underwritten in part by the Nathan Cummings Foundation, LILITH's Talent Bank is not a speakers bureau; it is a resource for the Jewish community, for nonprofit organizations and for the media.

Please fill in all applicable information. You are welcome to photocopy the form and to pass it along to others. If you would like to suggest a woman for inclusion in LILITH's talent bank who is too modest, or too well known to nominate herself, please send us her name and address with pertinent information. If you have heard a compelling speaker or know of any especially knowledgeable resource person, please recommend her.

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Area(s) of expertise. Please be as precise as possible—for example, physician with a special interest in women's health; AIDS educator for teenagers; composer of feminist Jewish liturgies, folklorist with expertise in Jewish women's dances, independent scholar who researches medieval history, etc. NOTE: Your area of expertise need not be specifically Jewish or feminist.

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(continued from page 7)

50th Anniversary of Women's Heroism During the Holocaust

The bodies of Alina Gertner, Rosa Robata, Regina Safirstajn and Esther Wajcblum swayed in the wind for three days in the gallows of Auschwitz-Birkenau. They had been hanged by the Nazis on January 6, 1945, just 21 days before the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, for their part in the October 7, 1944 Revolt. As they died, they shouted, "Take revenge, *nekome*, vengeance!" to their fellow factory workers, who were forced to watch the executions.

The 24-year old Robata had told a friend, "If I lose my life, I will lose it with honor," and for eight months she and her fellow workers in the Union Metalworks armament factory at Birkenau smuggled a teaspoon a day of gunpowder in secret pockets sewn into their clothing and sabotaged the devices they built.

The gunpowder was passed by Robata through the Jewish underground to the *Sonderkommando*, the prisoners forced to remove the human remains from the gas chambers and operate the crematorium ovens that burned an average of 1,000 bodies a day. The explosion on October 7, 1944, at the Birkenau crematorium signaled the beginning of the only mass prisoner revolt in the history of Auschwitz-Birkenau. Within hours of the revolt the Nazis had killed 450 men with machine guns and executed all of the escaped prisoners.

Robata and three of her friends were arrested and tortured by the Nazis for three

Jewish Underground member Rosa Robata

months before their public execution. Robata was the only one who knew the members and communication channels of the underground; despite the torture she underwent she didn't reveal a single name. There are hundreds of descendants of former prisoners and underground members who are alive because of her heroism.

For more information contact: The Rosa Robata Foundation, 33 Pleasant Avenue, Suite 300, Plainview, NY 11803-0024. Phone: (516) 349-0425, Fax: (516) 349-1292.

—Robin Beth Schaer

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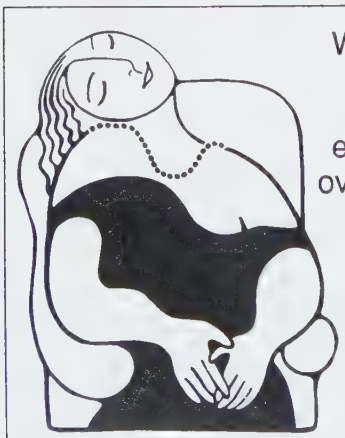

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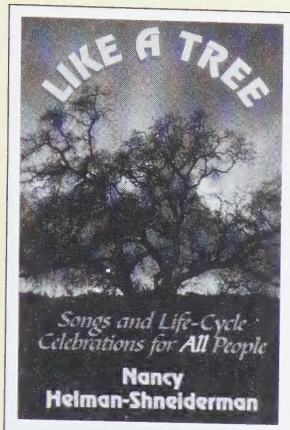

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Sarah and Hagar: A Socio-Drama Workshop begins with a 7-minute trigger film, created by filmmaker and activist Lilly Rivlin, dramatizing the relationship between Sarah and

Sarah and Hagar: a new look at the relationship.

Hagar, and presenting interviews with contemporary Arab and Israeli women. In a 2 to 3 hour program, participants re-enact key moments in the story dealing with jealousy, sharing, surrogacy, motherhood, legacy, father-son relationships, class, gender, race and conflict resolution. Suitable for divinity schools, womens studies and comparative religion departments, interfaith conferences, Hillel groups and other organizations. *Lilly Rivlin, 463 West St., #510A, New York, NY 10014. (212)242-0327.*

Customized concerts. Songwriter, choir conductor, and cantorial soloist Linda Hirschhorn will teach new Jewish music to a chorus of all ages in your community. The end product is a concert. Hirschhorn's music is mostly in the form of rounds and canons with words from traditional liturgy, and texts emphasizing peace, justice and inclusive language. Songs include celebrations of Miriam, Sarah, Hagar, Ruth, Naomi and the daughters of Judah. *Linda Hirschhorn, Oyster Albums, P.O. Box 3929, Berkeley, CA 94703. (510)654-0799. FAX (510)655-3598.*

Cantors in Concert is a traveling cabaret-style show of Broadway, Yiddish and liturgical music performed by 6 cantorial students at the Jewish Theological Seminary (4 of them women). Proceeds go to a fund to reinstate the year of study in Israel for cantorial students. *Lilly Kaufman, JTS, 3080 Broadway, New York, NY 10027. (212) 678-8805.*

Beta Israel:The Jews of Ethiopia is an exhibit of textiles, pottery, tools and baskets retrieved during the course of 18 missions by the North America Conference on Ethiopian Jewry, and originally shown at Yeshiva University Museum. It will be on view this year in Maryland, Kansas, Ohio and Michigan, and eventually become part of the permanent collection of the Israel Museum in Jerusalem. Under the auspices of the Department of Cultural Affairs of the Israel Consulate of New York, NACOEJ and Y.U.M. the exhibit is available for loan to facilities with the necessary environmental controls, curatorial services, and security. *Michele Seligmann, NACOEJ, 165 E. 56th St., New York, NY 10022. (212)752-6340.*

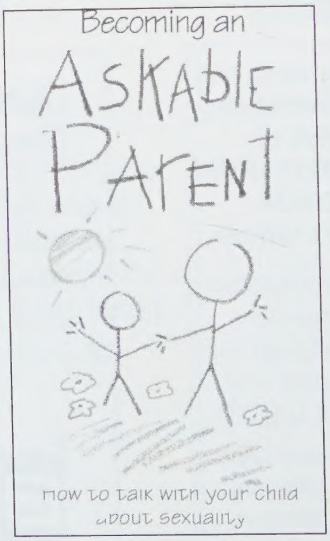
Reconstruction of a *tukul*, a traditional Ethiopian Jewish home. A woman spins cotton with her child on her back.

Take Our Daughters to Work Day, scheduled for April 27, 1995 will bring an estimated 3 million girls (ages 9-15) to workplaces across the U.S. The day helps girls begin to realize their dreams and ambitions Write for details about how your workplace or school can participate. *Ms. Foundation for Women, 141 Fifth Ave., 6-S, New York, NY 10010. (212) 742-2300.*

Keeping Body and Soul Together

The Mosaic Outdoor Club is a national Jewish non-profit all volunteer organization fostering interaction between Jewish people in outdoor environments, in order to educate and preserve the outdoors, while having a good time. Local groups already exist in Atlanta Baltimore, Boston, Denver, Hartford, Miami, New York, Orlando, Philadlephia, Raleigh, Rochester, Tucson, and nuclei are forming in Anchorage, Charlotte NC, New Orleans, and Washington, DC. To find out about a group near you, contact *Steve Harris, Mosaic Outdoor Mountain Club of Connecticut, Inc., P.O.B. 370233, West Hartford, CT 06119. (203)722-3900.*

The National Breast Cancer Coalition notifies activists of pending legislative issues related to breast cancer on which action—phone calls, letterwriting, mailgrams, legislative visits—are needed. *NBCC, 1707 L St. NW, Washington, DC. (202) 296-7477. FAX (202)265-6854.*



Becoming an Askable Parent: How to talk with your child about sexuality is a 20-page booklet stressing that sexuality education includes not only sex, but also the roles, behaviors and values people associate with being a man or woman. $2.00 includes postage. Ask also about other publications from the *American Social Health Association, P.O. Box 13827, Research Triangle Park, NC 27709. (919)361-8400.*

"Sexuality education is not just about sex."

"Calls for Materials"

The Third International Sephardic Film Festival will take place at the Film Society of Lincoln Center in New York City in April 1995. Send films of Sephardic interest, including home movies which depict family life and life cycle celebrations. *Janice Ovadiah, Sephardic House, 2112 Broadway, New York, NY 10012. (212)496-2173.*

Have any video memoirs on the women's movement? Archival and contemporary footage, home movies, still photographs, posters, graphics, slides of art work and tapes of women's music? Do you want to record your memories? These are all needed to research and develop The Second Wave, a documentary series for television. Send for guidelines. *Terry Lawler, Women Make Movies, 462 Broadway, #500, New York, NY 10013. (212) 925-0606, FAX 925-2052.*

Charlotte Salomon, a painter who developed a unique art form she called an "operetta" consisting of water color scenes overlaid with captions, dialogue and musical accompaniments, left behind 700 paintings before her death in Auschwitz. Mary Felstiner, author of *To Paint Her Life: Charlotte Salomon in the Nazi Era,* is appealing for help in finding more of Salomon's missing work. *Mary Felstiner, History Dept., San Francisco State University, San Francisco, CA 94132.*

"Charlotte's last night in her own room.".

Professional creative and performing artists are invited to apply for an extended residency program at the Arad Arts Project in Israel. Sessions run October through May each year. Applications (due end of July) and information from *Ruth Rauch, Center for Jewish Culture & Creativity, 1801 Ave. of the Stars, #300, Los Angeles, CA 90067.*

Feminist Economics is a new journal of the International Association for Feminist Economics, dedicated to interdisciplinary discourse on feminist perspectives on economics and the economy. Submission details from editor *Diana Strassmann, Feminist Economics, MS-9 Rice University, 6100 S. Main St., Houston TX 77005-1892. (713)527-4660. dls@rice.edu*

ildren of interfaith rriages can learn about their vish heritage, and parents can nelped to deal with issues of gious identity in a tuition-free year program. Based on an rdenominational model in nver, where rabbis (from ferent branches of Judaism) psychologists address adults, teachers explore holidays, ory and ritual with children, program has been replicated n some variations in fifteen es nationwide. Learn about ting one in your area from *bi Sharon Forman, Dept. for gious Education,UAHC, 838 h Ave., New York, NY 10021. 2)249-0100.*

eading material

ocaust-related literature in ille or Talking Book nat is available free to blind visually impaired persons. A og includes books such as *Abandonment of the Jews, From That Time And Place* ucy Dawidowicz; *hwitz: Beginning a New Era* d by Eva Fleischner; *An rupted Life* by Etty Hillesum; *All But My Life* by Gerta Klein; *Fragments of Isabella* by Isabella Leitner; *Beyond Belief* and *Denying the Holocaust* by Deborah Lipstadt; and *And the Sun Kept Shining* by Bertha Salz. Contact *Mindy J. Fliegelman, Library Services, Jewish Braille Institute of America, 110 E. 30th St., New York, NY 10016. (212)889-2525.* (Incidentally, if LILITH receives sufficient requests from readers for LILITH itself, JBI will make the magazine available in these formats. Let us hear from you.)

Broomstick, A Quarterly National Magazine By, For & About Women Over Forty has ceased publication after 15 years of bringing the personal experience and observations of mid-life and long-living feminists to a limited but thoughtful audience. For a list, by themes, of back issues for sale: *Broomstick, 3543 18th St. #3, San Francisco, CA 94110.*

Tzedaka

The Jewish community of Buenos Aires was devastated this past summer by the bombing of its Jewish Community Center in which over 100 people were killed and communal archives destroyed. Send contributions to *JDC-Argentine Relief Fund, 711 Third Ave., New York, NY 10017,* or *B'nai B'rith Disaster Relief Fund, Attn: Argentina Jewish Community Fund, 1640 Rhode Island Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20036.*

The Israel Free Loan Association has, since 1990, distributed over $4 million in loans to nearly 5,000 immigrants. Two employees and a cadre of volunteers process 250 loans each month, which have the remarkable default rate of approximately 2%. Help this "teach a person to fish" approach; send your check to the *American Friends of IFLA, Inc. Roslyn Eichen, 120 Hards La., Lawrence, NY 11559. (516)239-7435.* Or contact IFLA directly at *64 Aza St., Jerusalem 92384, Israel. (972-2)630248, FAX (972-2)669504.*

Ritual/Liturgy

Rosh Hodesh a new newsletter wants a profile of your Rosh Hodesh group—goals and identities, membership and affiliations; meeting format and focus, Rosh Hodesh rituals, (monthly, occasional, and life cycle); women's learning; feminist midrash, prayers, poetry, meditations, songs, movements; crafts; reviews of Rosh Hodesh resources and artwork. *Adina Levin, 20 Banks St., Somerville, MA 02144, or by e-mail to alevin@world.std.com.*

Jewish liturgy written by women for women *Covenant of the Heart* contains prayers, poetry, meditations and reflections written by individual members of sisterhoods and women rabbis from Reform congregations. Designed for use at meetings and gatherings for study and worship. $12.50. *Women of Reform Judaism, 838 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10021. (212) 249-0100.*

—compiled by Naomi Danis

Bat Mitzvah Prayer

by Menorah Lebowitz Rotenberg

May the Compassionate One grant
PEACE, if not love;
acceptance, if not friendship,
between the children of Hagar and the children of Sarah.

May women accept one another for who they are
and leave off "despising" the other [Genesis 16:4].

May men allow their children to claim their own identities;
neither expelling them [Genesis 21:14],
nor sacrificing them on the altar of their own vision
[Genesis 22:10].

May we all relinquish the need to
"be built up" through our children [Genesis 16:2].
In doing so, may we be freed to enjoy
the incomparable radiance they shed upon our lives.

AMEN.

A blessing composed by Menorah Lebowitz Rotenberg and inserted into the Grace After Meals on the occasion of the bat mitzvah of her daughter, Elizabeth Michal Rotenberg.

Though the references in this particular prayer are not from the bat mitzvah girl's specific Torah portion, the author suggests that prayers deriving from the week's parsha are beautiful additions to birthday celebrations, retirement rituals, weddings, Rosh Hodesh ceremonies, anniversary and graduation parties, babynamings and the like.

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